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THE MAJOR'S NIECE.

BY GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

CHAPTER IV.

MELDON left Portsmouth Lodge at four o'clock and walked back to Ballymoy. It took him two hours to accomplish the five miles, though he was a rapid and energetic walker. The country people were returning from the market in a straggling procession, and Meldon found it necessary to greet each group and to stop for a few minutes' conversation with his more intimate friends. The people had come into the town in the morning with cart-loads of turf, or with potatoes, fowl, butter and young pigs in the panniers of their donkeys. It was interesting to learn the prices at which these had been disposed of. The same carts and donkeys on their homeward journeys were laden with sacks of flour, loaves of bread, lamp-oil in bottles, parcels of drapery goods and smaller parcels of groceries. Meldon liked to find out, as far as possible, what was in the parcels, and nobody seemed to resent his curiosity. About half a mile outside the town he stopped for a long talk with a man on a shaggy grey horse, who had his wife perched uncomfortably behind him. He had been selling a salmon, poached from the upper reaches of the Ballymoy river, and Meldon was particularly anxious to know what he got for it.

While he was talking to this man, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, looking dejected and cowed, slunk along the road and rubbed himself against his master's legs. Meldon guessed at once, from the animal's appearance, that he had been ill-treated by the post-

master's wife. He dropped the subject of the poached salmon and set off homewards at a brisk pace, intending to restore the dog's self-respect by scolding his landlady. It turned out afterwards that the dog had stretched himself outside the kitchen door and that the postmaster's wife, having at the time a tray in her hands, had tripped over him and broken several valuable cups. It was not necessary, however, to lecture her for her carelessness. The dog's spirits revived before he got home. In the main street of the town he met another dog, a brown Irish terrier, whom he particularly disliked. The feeling was evidently mutual. After a few preliminary growls the two animals rushed together and a fierce fight began. Meldon recognised the brown terrier at once. It belonged to Doyle. He sent a small boy, one of several who were enjoying the spectacle of the fight, to fetch the hotel-keeper. While waiting for his arrival Meldon struck at both dogs with his walking-stick, hitting whichever he could with fine impartiality. Doyle came out of the hotel in his shirt-sleeves and took in the situation at once. Both he and Meldon were, in fact, well accustomed to acting the part of peace-makers. Each of them seized his own dog by the tail—a matter of some difficulty in the case of the Irish terrier, which had been docked—and dragged them apart.

'There'll be murder done one of these days,' said Doyle, 'and it'll be a good thing for the town if the both of them is killed at once.'

'Can you,' said Meldon, holding fast by his pet's tail, 'get a bicycle for Major Kent before this day week?'

'I can, of course—but—will you wait a minute, Mr. Meldon, till I lock up this dog in the stable? I can't hear myself speak with the way he's yapping to get away from me.'

'What does the Major want with another bicycle?' he said, when he returned from imprisoning the brown dog. 'Didn't he get a new one only last April? And I wouldn't say he'd been on it a dozen times since.'

'It isn't for himself he wants it. It's for a lady.'

'Do you tell me that? Surely to goodness now old Biddy O'Halloran isn't taking to the bicycle, and her after burying two husbands and putting six childer out into the world before she went housekeeping for the Major?'

'It's not for Mrs. O'Halloran he wants it.'

'Do you mean to tell me he's thinking of getting a bicycle for that red-headed girl of old Thomas Garry's, the one he has within

in the house along with Biddy O'Halloran? Not but what it might be handy enough to have one for the like of her, the way she could run into the town on it and post the letters, or get half a pound of tea, or whatever Biddy O'Halloran might come short of on a sudden in the house.'

'It's not for Mary Garry,' said Meldon. 'I don't mind telling you, Mr. Doyle, who it is for, and I will tell you some time again; but I can't be standing here all the evening in the middle of the street holding a white dog by the tail, and shouting out the Major's private affairs for half the town to hear.'

'That's true, as true as if I said it myself.'

'It's a great deal truer. If you said it there'd be precious little truth in it. I never knew you tell the truth—not what the Major would call the naked truth—since I've known you, but the once, and that was this day last week, when you said that brown dog of yours was an ugly blackguard.'

Mr. Doyle grinned his approval of this remark, which he regarded as a compliment. It was a handsome appreciation of his astuteness, and was therefore very agreeable to him. No man but a fool tells the truth in business or politics, and Doyle had a reputation to sustain. He could not afford to be thought a fool either in the conduct of public affairs or in his private capacity.

'Would you step inside the hotel with me, Mr. Meldon,' he said, 'and we can settle about the bicycle the Major wants? I was wishing to speak a word to you anyway, and I may as well do it now as again. You can let go that dog of yours. Now that my own's locked up, there isn't one in the town but what that white beast of yours has fought it and beaten it. He'll lie quiet till you come out if it's only for the want of something more agreeable to do.'

Meldon followed Doyle into the hotel.

'We'll have to go into my private apartment, for there's a commercial gent in the coffee-room,' said Doyle, after opening the door on the right-hand side of the passage and looking in. 'He travels in hardware for Clements and Ball of Sheffield. He was in the shop with me this morning trying to sell me some sort of new patent razor. I told him the only use we had for razors in this country—that is, barring the clergy, of course, Mr. Meldon—was for cutting throats with. I asked him was the safety razor any improvement on the old sort for that sort of work. "For if it is," said I, "I'll take a gross of them." You never met a man with

less idea of business than that fellow. Instead of telling me that his patent razor was the finest weapon out for cold-blooded and deliberate murder, and then booking my order for the whole gross of them, the poor man said that the point about his razors was that they wouldn't cut a baby.'

Mr. Doyle's private apartment was a small room at the back of the hotel premises. It smelt very strongly of whisky, bottled porter, and tobacco. It was furnished with a round table stained to imitate mahogany, six rickety chairs with horse-hair seats, and a sofa deeply dinged near the upper end where Mr. Doyle usually sat. There was a sloped writing-desk under the window, littered with dusty account-books and bill-forms. Over the fireplace hung a cracked mirror in a tarnished gilt frame. The other walls were adorned with two pictures of eminent race-horses and a handsomely framed portrait of an ecclesiastic, a relative of Doyle's, who had risen to high honour in the United States.

'What will you take?' asked Mr. Doyle.

The meaning of the question became apparent at once. Mr. Doyle turned the key in the door of a cupboard as he spoke, opened it, and displayed an array of bottles and tumblers, clean and dirty, on the shelves within.

'Nothing, thank you,' said Meldon. 'You know well enough that I don't touch a drop except at my meals.'

'Excuse me,' said Doyle.

He left the cupboard, walked over to the window and drew down the blind. Then he winked at Meldon.

'That idle spalpeen of a Paddy Clancy,' he said, 'spends half the day looking in at this window and talking round the town after about what goes on in here.'

The thought in Mr. Doyle's mind was plain. Mr. Meldon, as a clergyman, would naturally be unwilling to take any form of refreshment under the eye of the garrulous Paddy Clancy. Assured of decent privacy, it was natural to suppose that he would drink whisky when it was offered to him.

'I have a bottle of good stuff here,' said Doyle persuasively. 'The like of it is what you wouldn't get at the bar outside; no, nor at any other bar.'

'I won't touch it,' said Meldon. 'It isn't Paddy Clancy nor his talk that would stop me if I wanted to drink, but I don't. You've been acquainted with me long enough now, Mr. Doyle, to know that I don't go in for promiscuous drinking.'

'Will I send for a bottle of lemonade for you?' said Doyle with fine scorn.

'You will not. Do you think I'd go blowing myself out with that sort of fizzy stuff? Let's get to business now, Mr. Doyle, without any more of your talk and your foolishness. The lady the Major wants the bicycle for is his own niece that's coming to stay with him. He wants a good one, and he'll give ten pounds for it. Now what sort of a bicycle can you be sure of having here in the inside of a week?'

Mr. Doyle sat down at his writing-table and began to take a note of the order.

'What sized frame will you want?' he asked. 'Is the lady tall?'

'She's a well-grown girl, but not what you'd call exactly tall. I can't tell you her height to an inch, for I never measured her. The best thing will be to get a low frame, in case of accidents, and then if she's too big for it the saddle can be raised.'

After a quarter of an hour of brisk discussion, the make, grade, and size of the bicycle were settled. Doyle, acting, so he said, in a way that would get him into trouble with the makers if the transaction came to their ears, agreed to sell the bicycle at considerably less than the advertised price, thereby forgoing his own legitimate profit.

'It's on account of the respect I have for the Major,' he said, 'and on account of the liking I have for yourself, Mr. Meldon, that I'm selling the bicycle at the price I am. If it was anyone else that asked it of me, I'd——'

'You'd do just what you're doing this minute,' said Meldon, 'and make a good profit on the transaction.'

'I'll not be making a penny!'

He spoke with such conviction that Meldon hesitated in his disbelief.

'If you're not making money on the bicycle,' he said, after a pause, 'you'll be expecting to get something out of the Major some other way. What is it?'

Mr. Doyle rose slowly from his writing-table, crossed the room, and sat down in the accustomed corner of the sofa.

'I was telling you before,' he said, 'that there's a matter I want to speak to you about.'

'Trot it out then; and if the particular job you want the Major

to do isn't too obviously objectionable, I'll do my best to help you to persuade him.'

'You might have heard,' said Mr. Doyle, 'that the Lord Lieutenant is to pay a visit to the town and the Lady Lieutenant along with him.'

The Lord Lieutenant was a well-known English nobleman, the Marquis of Chesterton. His wife, a young American lady of large fortune, had devoted herself to the task of regenerating Ireland. After a careful study of the conditions of Irish life, she arrived at the conclusion that the work of reform ought to begin with the children. So far she was entirely original. None of her predecessors had attempted to improve the Irish nurseries. But the traditions of office were too strong in the end even for the daring mind of the American Marchioness. For the working out of her reform she lapsed into commonplace methods. She founded a society, non-political and non-sectarian in principle, called the 'Association for the Amelioration of the Irish Child,' and solicited subscriptions for its support. Whether the money was to be spent in presenting hygienic underclothes to the poorer mothers for the use of their babes, or in providing tins of patent foods at a cheap rate to large families, did not appear in the rules of the association.

Lady Chesterton's energies were devoted at first to the task of enrolling members. Not content with swearing in the fashionable parents who attended the levées and drawing-rooms at the Castle, she went round the country in a motor-car, accompanied by His Excellency and a private secretary, and sought recruits among the fathers and mothers of very unlikely places. No district was too remote for Lady Chesterton. She wished to dredge up parents from the streets of the most backward country towns, and Ballymoy was, naturally, one of the places she determined to visit. It seemed likely, since Ballymoy was twenty miles from a railway station, that the children there would be badly in need of amelioration.

'Father McCormack,' said Doyle, 'thinks we ought to have a public meeting and an address of welcome presented. Lord Lieutenants is common enough, and nobody'd put themselves about for one of them, nor yet for a Chief Secretary; but this is the first time a Lady Lieutenant ever came to these parts, and it's my opinion and Father McCormack's opinion that we ought to make the best we can of the occasion.'

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'I'm surprised at you, Mr. Doyle,' said Meldon. 'You that are a Nationalist and the President of every kind of league there is, would you be the first to welcome the representative of the English King?'

'You're not looking at the matter in the right way,' said Doyle. 'It isn't the representative of the King that I'm proposing to welcome—for I wouldn't do the like—but an amiable lady that has shown the greatest sympathy with the people of this country in a practical way. Why wouldn't I welcome her?'

'I suppose now,' said Meldon, 'that what you're going on is the thing the newspapers call the traditional courtesy of the Irish people towards the fair sex. Is that it?'

'It is,' said Doyle, looking Meldon straight in the face without winking.

'And there might be money in it?'

'Of course there's money in it!' said Doyle. 'Didn't you hear about the society she has started for ameliorating the Irish children? You can't do that without money. I saw a list of subscriptions the length of your arm in the "Irish Times" a week ago. And what I say is this: Why shouldn't Ballymoy get its share of what's going as well as another place?'

'So we're to have a public meeting, are we?'

'We are. And an address of welcome, illuminated. Now what I want to speak to you about is this: We're in a bit of a difficulty about who is to present the address.'

'I'll do it for you if you like,' said Meldon. 'I never have presented an address of welcome, but I'm sure I could if I tried.'

'It wasn't you I had in my mind; though I needn't tell you, Mr. Meldon, I'd sooner see you do it than another. I've a respect for you and a liking. But I'm not sure that it would suit for you to present that address.' Doyle's voice sank to a whisper. 'Father McCormack mightn't altogether like it.'

'Very well, then. Let Father McCormack do it himself. I shan't mind.'

'He won't,' said Doyle. 'He says that, the society being undenominational and the Lord Lieutenant being a strong Protestant, it wouldn't do for a priest to be presenting the address.'

'Do it yourself, then.'

'It wouldn't answer me at all. There's people in Ireland, and, what's more, there's newspapers in Dublin, that takes the greatest possible delight in misconstruing the actions of public men

like myself. You'll hardly believe me, Mr. Meldon, but them fellows is capable of saying that I was putting in for a knighthood if I presented that address. But I'll tell you what I was thinking. Maybe Major Kent would do it. He's a magistrate and a public man, and he's well liked in the town.'

'Ah!' said Meldon, 'that's where the Major comes in, is it? I thought we'd get to him soon.'

'I'm sure now,' said Doyle, 'that if you was to ask him he'd do it.'

'I'm quite sure he wouldn't, not if I went down on my knees to him and kissed his boot. The Major hates making a show of himself in public. He's not that kind of man at all.'

'Well, then, I don't know what's to be done. The address is up in Dublin being illuminated at the present minute, and we're sending a couple of the boys round the town on a house-to-house collection to-night to gather the money to pay for it. It'll be a terrible pity to have it all go to waste on us.'

'I'll tell you what now. When did you say they were coming?'

'The date's not fixed yet, but it'll be in about a fortnight.'

'Very well,' said Meldon; 'that'll suit perfectly. I'll get the Major's niece to present the address. She'll be here next week, and she's just the sort of young lady who'd enjoy presenting an address, and, what's more, would present it uncommonly well.'

'She might do.'

'She will do. You can't possibly get anyone better. The Lord Lieutenant will be delighted, and the Lady Lieutenant, as you call her, will ripple all over with pleasure. I'll arrange with the Major, but if I do you'll have to take another ten shillings off the price of the bicycle.'

'I'll lose money on it so.'

'You will not, but you'll make. You'll make more than you deserve. But I'll tell you what I'll do so as to meet you half-way: I'll get the Major to give five shillings towards the price of the illuminated address. That's as good as putting it into your pocket, for you'll have to pay up whatever they're short in the price. I don't see how anything could be fairer than that to both parties. And I can tell you that you're uncommonly lucky in getting a hold of Miss Purvis. There won't be another address in the whole province of Connacht presented with the same stately grace and general appropriateness of gesture and expression.'

CHAPTER V.

THE reputation of the Major's niece spread through all sections of society in Ballymoy during the week which preceded her arrival. Mr. Doyle, since Miss Purvis was to present the illuminated address, felt that he must create a public opinion in her favour. Chatting casually to customers at his bar, he spoke of her as a young lady whose beauty had taken English society by storm, who had been presented to the King, whose company was eagerly sought after by the rich and great. It came by degrees to be generally believed that the visit of the Lord Lieutenant and Lady Chesterton to Ballymoy was to be made in reality for the sake of becoming acquainted with Miss Marjorie Purvis, and that the formation of a branch of the Association for the Amelioration of the Irish Child was a mere excuse. Mrs. Ford, the wife of the Resident Magistrate, Mrs. Cosgrave at the Rectory, and Mrs. Gregg, who had only been a year married to the District Inspector of Police, received their invitation cards and met frequently to discuss the clothes they would wear on the festive occasion. They gradually came to think of Major Kent's niece as a young lady of splendid and most fashionable attire, in whose company even the remaining glories of Mrs. Gregg's trousseau would be dimmed.

Meldon's society was eagerly sought after. He alone appeared to be in a position to give detailed information about Miss Purvis. He always disclaimed any personal knowledge of her. He said repeatedly and distinctly that he had never seen her, that there was no photograph of her at hand and that he could do no more than guess at her appearance. He was nevertheless quoted as the authority for the portrait which fancy drew. Miss Marjorie—it was thus that everyone spoke of her—was believed to possess a mass of auburn hair, large brown eyes, a lovely complexion, and a figure of surpassing excellence. Her favourite colours, those in which she almost invariably dressed, were said by Mrs. Ford, who gave Meldon as her authority, to be a warm shade of heliotrope and a rich brown. Her hats were spoken of sometimes as 'picture'; at other times, more vaguely, as 'matinée.' Even the country people, dwelling in remote and boggy regions, took an interest in Miss Marjorie and held a theory of their own about her. She was, so they were assured that Meldon had said, a cousin of the Lord

Lieutenant's wife. Meldon enjoyed himself amazingly during the week.

Major Kent, who had a natural dislike to being questioned, and who felt besides that gossip was fixing a reputation on his niece which she might not be able to sustain, shut himself up as much as he could in Portsmouth Lodge. When caught one day in the main street of Ballymoy and asked for more information about his wonderful relative, he vehemently denied everything that anybody had said. His action merely served to stimulate the growth of what may be described as the 'Marjorie myth.' It was felt that the Major, as a modest man, could not be expected to boast publicly about the professional beauty of the Kent family.

The bicycle arrived four days after it had been ordered, which was regarded in Ballymoy as a remarkable proof of Doyle's business energy. The congratulations which poured in on him were well deserved. He had written three letters and sent no less than four telegrams about the bicycle. It was unpacked from its case under Meldon's personal supervision and polished to the highest possible degree. Then it was placed on show in the window of Doyle's drapery store, surmounted by a large card which bore in red letters an extremely mendacious notice. 'This bicycle,' so the public were informed, 'was specially manufactured by the British and Irish Cycle Company to the order of Major Kent, Esq., J.P., of Portsmouth Lodge.' The saleswoman of the drapery store, who had been obliged to remove a number of exquisite blouses from her window, resented the bicycle. The next morning she made up for the loss of advertisement which her goods suffered by placing in front of the bicycle a corset labelled 'Special and Elegant—The Marjorie.' Very fortunately Meldon happened to pass down the street shortly after the garment was exposed to view. He called on Doyle at once and insisted that the corset should be removed. He said that no self-respecting uncle, least of all Major Kent, would tolerate the publication of his niece's name in connection with underclothes.

The meeting of Miss Marjorie at a railway station twenty miles distant from Ballymoy was a serious business, and arrangements were made in good time. Jamesy Deveril, the groom, was sent off early in the morning with a spring-cart. He was to feed his horse in Donard and be ready to set off home with the luggage as soon as the train arrived. Major Kent and Meldon started at nine o'clock on the car. The train by which Miss Marjorie travelled

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was due in Donard at a quarter-past one. Luncheon could be eaten in the hotel and a start made for home at about half-past two o'clock, the horse by that time being sufficiently rested to travel his second twenty miles at a reasonable speed. There was thus every hope of Marjorie's reaching Portsmouth Lodge in time for a late afternoon tea and finding her luggage there to meet her. Mrs. O'Halloran was charged to have the tea ready. The Major himself unpacked and put out on plates the first instalment of cakes which arrived from the stores. Two of the ladies' papers were laid on the drawing-room table; the third and largest the Major put in his niece's bedroom. Meldon objected to this arrangement, arguing that it was a pity not to display the papers to the best advantage. The Major stuck to his own plan. He said that the illustrations of the advertisements in that particular paper were not suitable for public exhibition and that it would be embarrassing for his niece to look at them in Meldon's company. The tennis net was erected in the paddock and the ground marked out. Mrs. O'Halloran was told to see that Mary Garry adorned herself with a cap and apron. Meldon, acting on the advice of the young lady in Doyle's drapery store, had bought a supply of these garments and was particularly pleased at the enormously long white streamers which depended from them.

Mr. and Mrs. Gregg, who happened to be on the road in front of their house when the car started, waved a greeting to the Major. Doyle, at the door of the hotel, where the car had to stop to pick up Meldon, wished the expedition good luck. A straggling cheer, led by Paddy Clancy, gave a final send-off as the horse trotted along the main street of Ballymoy.

Travelling quietly, so as not to exhaust the horse, the Major and Meldon arrived in Donard shortly after twelve o'clock. They went at once to the hotel and saw their horse stabled and fed. Then they went indoors to order luncheon. The landlord offered them a choice of chops or chicken. The Major ordered both—a wise precaution, for the chicken destined for the meal was still at large, pecking Indian meal in the yard. The question of a pudding was more difficult. A custard pudding, suggested by the landlord, was not satisfactory. The Major himself detested custard pudding and found it difficult to believe that his niece would eat it. The landlord did not seem hopeful of his cook's being able to make anything else.

Driven to despair by the Major's persistent objections to the

custard pudding, he recollected at last that there was a 'tin of what they call pineapples in the shop beyond.' He supposed that the Major could have it if he liked; but, foreseeing possible disappointment, he disclaimed any responsibility for its condition.

'I wouldn't say but it might have gone bad on us. I mind seeing it there on the shelf along with the jam and the starch for maybe five years.'

The wrangle about luncheon lasted half an hour, and it was one o'clock when the Major and Meldon reached the railway station. Jamesy Deveril and the spring-cart stood at the gate. A rope was ready at hand to bind the niece's luggage securely into its place.

'I suppose,' said the Major, 'she won't have more luggage than the cart can carry.'

'No,' said Meldon, 'she won't. From my experience of girls, I should say that at the very outside she won't have more than one large trunk, a smaller one, a hold-all, two hat-boxes, a dressing-case, and a small hand-bag; not counting rugs, umbrellas, and perhaps golf clubs. The dressing-case and the hand-bag we shall, of course, take with us on the car. She will very likely want them in the hotel before luncheon. The rest will easily fit on the cart. I hope you told Jamesy to start at once and drive lively.'

'I did. I told him to be off the minute he got the luggage.'

'That's all right. The luggage ought to get there before we do. She'd naturally want to change her dress before tea. I wish now that we'd thought of telling Mrs. O'Halloran and Mary Garry to unpack her things for her.'

'We could wire to them,' said the Major, 'if you think it's necessary.'

'Better not,' said Meldon. 'We'd only confuse Mrs. O'Halloran. What with the afternoon tea and Mary Garry's cap and apron, she's over-excited already. A telegram might upset her seriously, and from what I saw of Mary Garry yesterday I should say that the sight of an orange envelope would drive her into hysterics.'

They paced the platform together in silence for nearly five minutes. Then the Major spoke again.

'You'll take her on your side of the car, J. J., and talk to her. I'll drive.'

'All right. I think it would show more family affection if you sat with her and let me drive. But she's your niece, not mine, so, of course, you can arrange it any way you like.'

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'I don't understand girls,' said the Major. 'I couldn't possibly talk to one for two hours and a-half straight on end. You can point out all the objects of interest we pass on the way.'

'Of course, if you're afraid of your own niece, Major, I'll tackle her for you. I'm not nervous. So far as Miss Marjorie herself is concerned, I daresay she'll prefer sitting with me. She certainly would if she knew that your only idea of conversation is pointing out objects of interest. But I should have thought you'd have liked to hear the latest news about your sister. You haven't seen her for twenty-two years, you know. You ought to want to hear about her.'

The Major made no apology for his want of interest in Mrs. Purvis. For five minutes more they paced the platform in silence. Then Meldon looked at his watch and remarked that the train was late. The station-master, being appealed to, assured them that 'she' had been signalled from the next station and would arrive in less than ten minutes. He was right. Shortly after he spoke the engine panted round the corner outside the station and dragged up to the platform two coaches and a luggage-van. The Major and Meldon peered eagerly into the two first-class compartments. One of them contained a Government official, a dignified gentleman with a despatch-box and a cigar. The other was empty. In the second-class compartments there was nobody at all. From the other coach, which was made up of five third-class compartments, there emerged three commercial travellers, two labourers, and a dishevelled little girl of about ten years old.

'She hasn't come!' said the Major.

'No,' said Meldon, 'she hasn't. We may as well go home.'

'What on earth are we to do? Where can she be? My sister Margaret——'

'From what you've told me about your sister,' said Meldon, 'I think it highly likely that Miss Marjorie, having once got off by herself, has made up her mind to have a gay time of it in Dublin for a few days before coming down to a dull hole like Ballymoy. Lots of girls do that sort of thing nowadays. It's what's called asserting their economic independence.'

'She's lost!' said the Major. 'Either she's missed the train in Dublin or she's forgotten to change at Athlone. Margaret will never forgive me! I must send wires to every station along the line. I shall take the next train to Dublin myself and look for her.'

'There isn't a train till ten o'clock to-night. Don't get fussy, Major. The girl's all right. She's probably rushing about the streets on top of a tram this minute, enjoying herself immensely. I know exactly the sort of things a girl would do. She'll turn up all right in two or three days.'

The station-master approached them from the other end of the platform and touched his hat :

'There's a young lady here, Major, who says she's expecting you to meet her.'

'Where?' said the Major.

The station-master pointed to the little girl, who stood alone but apparently quite self-possessed near the luggage-van. A porter had laid a small leather-bound cabin-trunk on the platform beside her.

'Good Lord!' said the Major. 'Can that be Marjorie?'

'She's not exactly what you led us to expect,' said Meldon, 'but she's evidently your niece. She's the only niece you'll get here to-day anyhow, so you'd better make the most of her.'

'But—but—she's a mere child!'

Meldon left him and walked up to the little girl.

'Are you Marjorie Purvis?' he asked.

She stretched out her hand to him with frank friendliness. Her face was very dirty and her hair was dishevelled, but she was neither shy nor embarrassed.

'You're Uncle John, I suppose?' she said.

'No, I'm not,' said Meldon. 'My name is Meldon—Joseph John Meldon—and you can call me "J. J." for short if you like. Lots of people do. Your Uncle John is standing over there beside the man with the gold band on his hat and the brass buttons on his coat. He doesn't seem to be a very affectionate uncle, but in reality he is. When you get to know him better, you'll find that the stiffness of manner which strikes you now will wear off and he'll become quite demonstrative. The thing for you to do now is to go over to him and kiss him heartily on both cheeks.'

'He doesn't look as if he wants to be kissed,' said Marjorie doubtfully.

'All the same, he does. That's what he's waiting for.'

Marjorie took Meldon's hand and led him along the platform to the Major.

'Uncle John,' she said, 'here I am.'

'How do you do?' said the Major, putting out his right hand.

'J. J. said you'd like me to kiss you,' said Marjorie, 'but I can't unless you stoop down.'

The Major scowled ferociously at Meldon and stooped. Marjorie kissed him decisively, first on one cheek and then on the other. The station-master grinned.

'Come on now,' said Meldon, 'and we'll get a bite to eat. I expect you're hungry, aren't you, Marjorie? Your Uncle John and I have arranged to have a chicken and some chops ready for you, and a custard pudding and some tinned pineapple which has probably gone bad. After that we're going for a long drive on a car.'

'With a nice gee-gee,' said the Major.

He felt disappointed in his niece and puzzled; but he did not intend to allow Meldon to take entire possession of her. He believed that the term 'gee-gee' was the proper one to use in speaking of a horse to a child. Marjorie looked at him with pitying scorn. Then she took Meldon's hand and hurried him along the platform.

'Come along,' she said, 'and let's feed. I've got a rare old twist on!'

'Good God!' said the Major.

'Marjorie,' said Meldon, 'does your Aunt Margaret—I mean to say, does your mother, Mrs. Purvis, allow you to use language of that kind? Do you in your own home, in the presence of your parents, speak of "a rare old twist"?''

The child looked up at him and a smile broadened out on her face.

'You're not mother. You don't mind what I say. No more does Uncle John. He was silly just now about the gee-gee, but I think he's a nice man really.'

'He is,' said Meldon, 'and so am I. But it doesn't follow that we're the sort of men who habitually use bad language.'

'"Twist" isn't bad language,' said Marjorie. 'But I do know some bad language, real bad. I learned it from a sailor on the ship. It's terrible bad and shocking. Shall I say it for you?'

'No,' said Meldon, 'don't! It might be too much for me. I'm young and innocent—younger than I look, a good deal. But some time, when you're alone with your Uncle John, say it to him, all you know of it, straight out. You'll enjoy watching the way he takes it.'

CHAPTER VI.

MARJORIE displayed a healthy appetite at luncheon. The chops were hardly less tough than the chicken, but she ate first one and then the other with apparent enjoyment. To the amazement of her uncle she also liked the custard pudding. The pineapple, after Meldon had smelt it and carefully dissected a slice with his knife, was pronounced unfit for human food, to the great disappointment of Marjorie.

When luncheon was over, Major Kent whispered to Meldon that he wished to speak to him privately. After a profusion of apologies, which Marjorie accepted graciously, the two men left the room.

'Well,' said Meldon, when they got outside the hotel and had lit their pipes, 'I must say Miss Marjorie has rather let us in. She's a charming little girl, of course—I wouldn't ask a nicer, but she's not exactly what the people of Ballymoy have been expecting.'

'It's entirely your fault, J. J.,' said the Major, and it was evident that he was seriously vexed.

'I don't see that. How on earth can it be my fault that your niece is only ten years old? Blame your sister Margaret if you must blame anybody, or blame Purvis; though I think you will be acting unjustly if you do even that. But you can't possibly blame me or speak about it's being my fault.'

'I do blame you. If you hadn't gone gassing about the town saying that Marjorie was a grown-up young lady, this trouble would never have come on us. Now we're in an utterly ridiculous position. We're committed to a series of parties and an address to a Lord Lieutenant, and everybody is expecting to see a fashionable beauty. Good heavens, J. J.! What are we to do?'

'The address to the Lord Lieutenant will be all right. I'll settle that with Doyle. The parties are a bit awkward, I admit. I suppose we couldn't buy her a long frock and pretend she's grown-up, could we? She wouldn't look so very young if we rigged her out properly. Mary Garry would do up her hair. Marjorie herself would enjoy it. It would be the best of games for her.'

'Don't be an infernal ass! We've got to see the thing through as it stands. But whatever possessed you to say that she was a grown-up young lady?'

'I deduced her age from the information you afforded me,' said Meldon. 'You distinctly said that the Purvises had been twenty-two years married, and that the girl's name was Marjorie. I still maintain that the inference that I drew from those two facts was perfectly sound in principle. It has turned out to be wrong. I admit that, of course. But nine times out of ten—ninety-nine times out of a hundred—I should have been perfectly right. I don't see that I can be blamed in any way. The responsibility for our unfortunate position—and I quite grant that it is unfortunate—rests entirely on you.'

'It doesn't! I never opened my mouth except to say that I knew nothing about her whatever.'

'It does! You ought to have known the age of your own sister's child. It's a great shame for a man like you not to have kept in touch with his sister. There you were, grossly ignorant of the very existence of your only sister's only child.'

'She's not the only child. I happen to know that much. Margaret has written to me again and again, and each time she has announced the birth of either a son or a daughter. I think there must be ten of them at least. I'm nearly sure that I'm godfather to four. I suppose this one is the youngest.'

'If you'd told me all that at the time when we first talked the matter over, I shouldn't have been so confident about Marjorie's age. However, there's no use going back on your past mistakes. I don't want to twit you with them and rub them in. We must get back to that poor child. She'll be lonely.'

'Wait a minute, J. J! There's no hurry. I want to make some arrangements. We must spend some hours here.'

'Why?'

'Because I'm not going to drive through Ballymoy till after dark. I couldn't face it. Everybody will be out watching for us. You saw the way they turned out to see us off. It will be worse going home. I should have to offer some kind of public explanation.'

'Be a man, Major! Face the inevitable. After all, you'll have to explain sooner or later. It will be easier for you to do it once for all in a public speech from the car outside of Doyle's hotel, than to be dribbling out the miserable truth to one person after another as you happen to meet them. Far better get the thing over at one gulp.'

'No. If I get safe home to-night I'll shut myself up and leave

you to do the explaining. I'll write round and put off those six abominable parties.'

'You can't do that. It would be absolutely cruel. Mrs. Ford's got a new dress. She told me so herself. One or two of the parties must come off. If they don't, she'll fall into a rapid decline and her death will lie at your door.'

'Let her die! What does it matter to me whether she dies or not?'

'And even if we put off all the parties, you've still got to face the Lord Lieutenant. He's not likely to die just to oblige you, and I don't see any other way of escaping that ceremony. You're absolutely committed to it.'

'I'll send round word that the child's in bed with the measles.'

'You may,' said Meldon. 'You may tell a deliberate lie in public. You may cast a slight upon the representative of the King, insult him wantonly in a far worse way than any Nationalist ever did; but don't imagine that you'll escape by doing that. You'll be found out to a certainty, and then the consequences will be worse than anything you can imagine. From what I have seen of Marjorie so far, I should say that she's not at all the sort of little girl who'd stay in bed all day when she hasn't got the measles. She'd get out as soon as your back is turned and go wandering somewhere about the roads while you're perjuring yourself to the Lord Lieutenant. Somebody will see her, and then you'll be in a much worse position than you are now.'

The Major remained silent, overwhelmed perhaps by the prospect of the failure of his plan.

'You'll hardly go so far,' said Meldon, 'as to actually inoculate the unfortunate child in such a way as to make her really ill. If you do, I'll denounce you publicly. I'm very fond of poor little Marjorie, although she's not my niece. The Lord Lieutenant's wife is coming round here specially to protect children from ill-usage. If I tell her that you've been injecting any kind of vile bacillus into your niece Marjorie, she'll have you prosecuted with the utmost severity, even if she has to get a special Act of Parliament passed for the purpose, and she'll be perfectly right.'

'Anyhow,' said the Major sullenly, 'I'm not going home till after dark.'

'All right. I suppose I must do my best to amuse Marjorie for the afternoon. There is an old castle and almost half a ruined abbey just outside the town. I don't expect she'll care much

about them, but, unless you can suggest something better to do, I'll take her to see them. I expect the poor child is weeping at this moment in the hotel from sheer loneliness and from having nothing to read except railway time-tables.'

Meldon was wrong. Marjorie was not weeping. She was not even in the coffee-room, where she had been left. He and Major Kent looked at each other anxiously.

'There!' said Meldon. 'Now you've gone and lost your niece. You'll have to be more careful about her or there'll be trouble afterwards with your sister Margaret. She may have ten children, as you say; she may have a dozen, but you'll find she'll resent the loss of Marjorie.'

A loud burst of laughter from the bar of the hotel reached the coffee-room.

'I'll get those people to come and help to look for her,' said the Major.

He crossed the passage, followed by Meldon, and pushed open the door which led to the bar. Round the counter stood the landlord, two maids, the three commercial travellers who had come in the train with Marjorie, and several of the inhabitants of the town of Donard. On the counter, picking her steps very carefully among the glasses, was Marjorie.

'Hullo, J. J.!' she said. 'Hullo, Uncle John! I thought you were never coming.'

'The young lady,' said the proprietor of the hotel apologetically, 'was just showing us the way the captain did be walking about the deck of the steamer she came home in.'

'Marjorie,' said the Major, 'get down at once!'

'I hope,' said Meldon, 'that you're convinced now, Major, that your measles plan won't work. Is that the kind of child who'd spend a day in bed when she's perfectly well?'

Marjorie was lifted from the counter in the arms of a grinning housemaid and deposited beside the Major.

'Come along,' said Meldon, taking her hand. 'We're going to see an ancient castle. It's a perfectly fascinating ruin of immense antiquity, full of every sort of secret chamber and hidden cave, and ghosts which walk at night in clanking chains.'

The description evidently appealed strongly to Marjorie. She passed out of the hotel at a run, dragging Meldon after her. The Major followed. They were obliged to stop several times in order that Marjorie might admire some sight that was new to her. The

turf-laden carts excited her curiosity. The fact that few of the children wore shoes and stockings aroused in her a desire to take off her own. The castle, when they reached it, proved disappointing. Nothing survived in the way of a secret chamber or a hidden cave. No ghost put in an appearance. Meldon saw Marjorie's face fall. He roused himself to provide some entertainment for her.

'Let's play hide-and-seek,' he said. 'You and I will hide and your Uncle John will seek for us.'

'No,' said Marjorie decidedly; 'I'll seek! You two can hide.'

'Very well. Turn your face to that wall and don't look round until we shout. Come along, Major.'

Meldon climbed half-way up a broken stone staircase and stood hidden by a projecting corner of the wall.

'As soon as you're concealed, Major,' he said, 'shout "Cuckoo" as loud as you can.'

Several minutes passed in silence and Meldon descended to discover what had happened to the Major. He found him wandering among the ruins, quite unable to decide on a hiding-place.

'Hurry up!' said Meldon. 'You mustn't keep the poor child waiting there all day. Here, lie down flat behind that stone—flatter than that. Your shoulders are sticking up, and she'll see you the moment she turns round. Now, give me a minute to get up my staircase again, and then shout "Cuckoo."'

'I can't do that—I really can't, J. J. It's—it's too ridiculous.'

'You must. You'll have to play this game every day more or less for the next six weeks—except Sundays, of course. You may as well get used to it at once. When you undertake to entertain a child, there's no greater mistake than to do the thing half-heartedly. Buck up, Major, and throw yourself into the game.'

The Major shouted a feeble and wavering 'Cuckoo!' Marjorie started on her search and almost immediately discovered him.

'Run, Uncle John; run!'

'Where to? Why?'

'To the den, of course. Don't you understand the game?'

The Major ran. Marjorie pursued him. After an exciting chase he took refuge breathlessly on Meldon's staircase. Then Marjorie had them both at her mercy and enjoyed her position immensely. The game went on again and lasted till every possible hiding-place in the ruin had been exploited.

'It's five o'clock,' said Meldon. 'Let's go and get tea. Then we'll start for home.'

It was nearly nine o'clock when the car reached Ballymoy. Marjorie was sound asleep, with her head on Meldon's shoulder. His arm was round her and he had covered her with a rug. It was fortunate that there were very few people in the street. If Mr. Doyle or any other of the chief inhabitants of the town had seen the position of Major Kent's famous niece, the young lady's reputation for propriety of conduct would certainly have suffered.

'J. J.,' said the Major, 'how do you suppose that Mrs. O'Halloran will take this—this alteration in our plans?'

'It's very difficult to tell,' said Meldon. 'I should say myself that if we'd told her at first that your niece was a child she'd have packed up her box and left you on the spot. As it is, I expect she'll be so relieved to find that she isn't a grown-up young lady that she'll be quite kind to Marjorie.'

'I hope she will,' said the Major. 'I expect, I am confident she will. What I'm afraid of is that she'll ill-treat you and me, especially me. Marjorie will be a shock to her after all the preparations she has made.'

Mrs. O'Halloran had, in fact, got over any shock she may have received many hours before the car arrived at Portsmouth Lodge. Jamesy Deveril, who drove the spring-cart, brought home the news that Miss Marjorie was no more than 'a little slip of a girleen, maybe ten year old, and maybe not that itself.' Mrs. O'Halloran was at first very indignant. The honour of Portsmouth Lodge, of which she felt herself the chief supporter, was in danger of being brought into public contempt by Miss Marjorie's failure to come up to the descriptions given of her beforehand. After awhile her anger gave place to anxiety. As the appointed time of the arrival passed and hour after hour went by, she expressed fears about the safety of the party. She despatched Mary Garry again and again to 'the top of the hill beyond to take a look if there might be a car coming up along the road.' When, at last, she heard the wheels on the gravel, she rushed from the kitchen to the front door and assailed Major Kent and Meldon with an outburst of indignant reproach.

'What was on ye at all,' she said, 'to keep the child out till this hour of the night? Have ye no sense, the pair of yez? Here it is near ten o'clock and the little lady ought to have been in her

bed two hours ago. Where have you her hid? Is it drinking ye were beyond at Donard?’

‘It was not,’ said Meldon, ‘but playing hide-and-seek in the old castle.’

‘I wouldn’t wonder at you to do the like, Mr. Meldon. Sure, everybody knows that you’ve no sense, no more than the youngest gossure that does be going to the school. But the Major’s old enough to know better.’

‘Come here now, Mrs. O’Halloran,’ said Meldon, ‘and take the child from me. I’m afraid to get off the car with her the way she is. Stop your nonsense and come here.’

‘Nonsense, is it? No, but sense, more sense than ever came out of your mouth, for all you think you can build a nest in a body’s ear with your talk.’ She took Marjorie in her arms. The child, half awakened, began to cry. ‘Come then, alanav,’ said Mrs. O’Halloran. ‘Come to me, agra. Will you loose your hold on her, Mr. Meldon? Haven’t you made trouble enough for one day with your hide-and-seek in the old castle?’

‘Take her,’ said Meldon. ‘Hold her carefully, and don’t drop her. Give her a cupful of hot milk—more if she’ll take it. Then put her to bed. And if you can’t do it yourself, get Mary Garry to help you.’

Mrs. O’Halloran stood speechless with Marjorie in her arms. She looked at Meldon, and longed for words which would express her feelings towards him. She failed to find them. She turned and entered the house in silence.

‘Mind the step,’ said Meldon. ‘You’ll trip over the front of your dress if you don’t take care. You’d better let Mary Garry help you.’

‘Me,’ muttered Mrs. O’Halloran, ‘that has reared six of my own. It beats all, so it does! The Lord forgive the woman that was mother to the like of him and sent him out to be the plague of the world. Will you get away out of that, Mary Garry, from under my feet? What would suit you would be to be fetching the nightdress for the little lady that I have airing before the kitchen fire. And when you have that done you can go in and attend on the master and Meldon. They’ll be wanting something to eat after their gallivanting and play-acting.’

(To be continued.)

*SEMANGHELLINA AND THE MAD-BLOODED
YOUTH.*

To G. A. L.

'HERE is a gallant horse for sale, clean pastern, flowing mane ;
His dam was of the Arab breed, his sire was bred in Spain.
This horse was surely foaled to bear the Sultan's Grand Vizier,
His master is a reverend man ' (so cried the auctioneer) ;
'Three hundred pounds is all the price we ask a mountaineer.'

Then forward sprang a wild young man ; mad mountain blood had he :
'I boast an ancient lineage, a goodly guarantee ;
Five times a day I say my prayers ; I fast at Ramadan :
I have no gold, but much I'll win for you in Serbistan,
If you will trust the honour of a hill-bred fighting man.'

That wise old merchant pondered, as he stroked his beard of white ;
He loved all subtle bargaining, at dawn, at noon, at night.
'If thou wilt swear to give to me all gains you get abroad,
A blessing on thy wildness and great strength to thy long sword ;
Then mount the horse in Allah's name, and ride him as his Lord.'

The mad-blood youth rode out to raid the realm of Serbistan ;
He halted not for brigands, and he tarried at no khan ;
There was no torrent of the hills that wrecks a caravan,
Nor any wrath of waters that one-half as fiercely ran,
As the blood that urged the wildness of that wild young man.

The King was on his balcony, about him stood his kin ;
The courtiers all fell silent, as the youth rode to the inn.
He called a Servian ostler, 'Fetch me fodder for my steed,
Fetch water to refresh him, and the best corn for his feed.'
'Oh, hasten thou,' a herald cried. 'Of thee the King hath need.'

He fed his horse and said his prayers, then hied him to the King.
He gave him low obeisance, but shrewd, hard bargaining.
'Nine hundred pounds my horse's price. My Lord, he has no peer.'
The Elders spoke together long : 'O Lord our King give ear ;
We dare not tax the people thus—this stallion's price is dear.'

24 SEMANGHELLINA AND THE MAD-BLOODED YOUTH.

An ancient greybeard planned a plot (he sought a courtier's place):
'We'll trap him with our cunning, and entice him with a face;
Now listen gentle Majesty, praise God for this wise plan:
Let girls with roses in their hair attend at the maidan,
And love will fight our battle with this wild young hill-bred man.'

And so upon the morrow stood the men of high estate,
Where lovely girls were brought like doves beyond the Palace gate.
The youth rode out from arches where the light was faint and dim,
And though he loved no maid of them, their hearts went out to him;
For horse and man were fine to see—high courage, splendid limb.

Dawn rode no lighter on the winds than he upon his horse,
No sweat was on his stallion's neck when he reined in his course.
The angry Elders cursed aloud that greybeard and his creed.
The ancient rascal answered them, 'One girl can help indeed:
You have forgot the King's own child; she shall obtain the steed.

'Semanghellina's beauty is beyond the stars and sun;
If he but see and speak to her his valour is undone.
The racing steeds are good for those who charge upon the foe;
It's mules that carry merchandise, more swift than chargers go.
And though your blades be sharp, my Lords, by God your wits are
slow.'

The youth rode from dark portals with the sunshine on his face,
Upon a steed that touched the ground as wild deer in the chase.
Around the maidan once he went, swift as a wild bird flies,
And twice he went, but then he saw Semanghellina's eyes.
He reined his steed, and saw nought else beneath the noonday skies.

The Princess came to his salute; she stroked his horse's mane
(That ancient greybeard prophesied, 'My scheme will not be vain').
The youth spoke of his contract; then, 'O Lady come with me;
There's nought can overtake my horse from Belgrade to the sea,
And leave your father's house, my soul, to learn what love can be.'

She answered him, 'O my two eyes! O splendid to behold!
Within the palace of my sire I have a cup of gold;
I have a woven cloak of gold, the pockets in it nine,
And many liras each contains that shall be yours and mine.
Now listen to my counselling. Make thou no hasty sign,'

She said, 'The noontide sun is strong and in his fiercest mood,
His strength has come in a good hour to madden thy wild blood ;
Now cry aloud for water, and it's I will serve thy need.'
The youth swayed in the saddle, and, 'I faint upon my steed ;
Oh bring a cup to quench my thirst, and God reward the deed.'

She came to him all dressed in gold across the noonday sand ;
He swung her to the saddle with the gold cup in her hand.
Oh, loud the outcry in Belgrade. No steed that had a lord
Stood idle in the stables then ; each sheath gave up its sword ;
But he had left them all behind before he reached the ford.

Then fell upon that greybeard knave the angry nobles' blows,
While through the summer they rode on to high Albanian snows.
The summer was their comrade, and God's mercy in the showers,
They crossed clear streams of water, and they lay on banks of flowers ;
Between the two his bare sword gleamed throughout the midnight
hours.

They rested on a lawn of green, when suddenly he cried,
'A curse on empty journeys, and a curse upon this ride ;
O Allah give him trouble, the steed that I bestride.'
The maiden answered, 'O my soul ! whatever else betide,
Your sword is safe beside you and your love is by your side,
A proper pair to cheer a man and fill a chief with pride.'

He answered her : 'In Ipek, where the mountain clansmen are,
An ancient merchant bargains in the gloom of the bazaar ;
He ponders on my coming and forecasts the wealth I bring :
I bear a golden tribute and the daughter of a King.
I may not tarry longer, dear, to hear the wild birds sing.'

Semanghellina made reply, 'I was not won by force ;
With my whole heart I came to you to mount your gallant horse.
The woods are full of music, see the lovely glades of green.
Forget your idle promises, and what those wild words mean :
For you shall lead a warrior band, and I will be your Queen.'

He said, 'My coral rosary has ninety-nine red beads,
The Names of the All Merciful ; were each a wound that bleeds
And I could staunch the hurt of them by treachery and lie,
By Allah and his Prophet and the Saints that testify,
I would not be an infidel ; a Moslem I would die.'

26 SEMANGHELLINA AND THE MAD-BLOODED YOUTH.

They travelled swiftly through the hills; at night the moon was strong.
They paused no more by rivers, nor to hear the wild birds' song.
At last they came to Ipek town, beneath the evening star,
And found the merchant where he sat outside the old bazaar :
'It's fast we've come,' the wild youth said; 'it's fast we've come
and far.

'Now hear the tale I have to tell, O Master of the Horse :
I've robbed a King and country, and I conquered fraud by force.
By Allah who is merciful to all of the true creed,
By Him the great Disposer, I have been true indeed ;
So if thou judge me faithful, Lord, then grant my work its meed.

'There's sorrow in the Palace, and they mourn in Serbistan
The gains that I have got you and the glory of my clan ;
The King grieves for his daughter and the wrecking of his plan,
A scheme of guile and cunning that an ancient wretch began,
To steal away the wisdom of a young mad-blooded man.

'Here is a cup of gold I bring and plenteous golden store,
And such a gold embroidered cloak was never seen before ;
The work is of the Moorish kind, from Jerez or Xenil,
The garment bears the name of God. Your horse waits for your will,
To ride to Prisrend in the plain or Dibra on the hill.

'And, last of all, Effendiler, a maid I bring to you,
A very flower of loveliness that keeps dawn's freshest dew ;
She has a Christian King to sire, so she is yashmak free.
My soul yearns for her beauty as the Greeks desire the sea.
Then reckon out our contract now ; God's grace abide with thee.'

That ancient merchant thought awhile, a-fingering his beads :
'I sing the praise of Allah's name ; may He requite thy deeds.
Mad-blooded one, you take no thought like pilgrims when they start,
But Allah loves a generous man, He loves a generous heart.
Oh warm my welcome home, my son, to whom I bade depart.

'Mine is the cloak and half its wealth ; I'll take the cup of gold ;
The horse is thine and half the wealth ; the girl is yours to hold.
My life has lain in bargaining ; I know the subtle phrase
That makes the maidens buy my silk, that wins the women's praise.
God does not care for twining paths ; go on in your straight ways.'

AUBREY HERBERT.

PASTELS UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS.¹

BY MARGARET L. WOODS.

III.—THE NORTHWARD TREK.

AN infinite height of morning sky on which white clouds are sailing and shining, and under its joyous incomparable blue a southern ocean where little crystalline waves, some blue, some emerald-green, almost all tipped with white foam, run races and charge each other, with crisp splashing sounds, like the merry noises of young animals at play. And the waves have living playmates too. Brown wings and white and grey are flashing and stooping, rising and floating almost among them: molly-hawks, Cape pigeons, gulls of all sorts. Sea-birds the land calls them; but to the sea they are land-birds, the light squadrons that the land sends out to welcome and to scrutinise—mainly as to the broken-meats department—the ships coming in from the large lonely spaces where there are no wings in the air, and no cries either, except the whine of the wind in the cordage, and its hollow engulfed roarings in the funnels. Land it assuredly is, ethereally blue, phantasmal at first, growing up along the horizon: wild craggy mountains beyond the strong clear-cut lines of the sea waves. Taller they grow and more substantial, yet losing nothing of their azure. This is the stern inhospitable coast of the Cape, round which flow diverse ways deep ocean currents, mysteriously led, regardless of the moon. The old seafarers, by this time short of water and sick of scurvy, their keels loaded with barnacles, would be glad when they sighted this coast, though it were the Cape of Storms; for they would know that unless some special disaster overwhelmed them, they would shortly be in the safe anchorage of Table Bay, where were springs of sweet water and gardens full of vegetables. Even on our own big modern ship, which has food and luxuries aboard for the homeward as well as the outward voyage, the sight of those blue mountains causes a peculiar stir. It is not only that all the usual binoculars are fixed upon them. It is that at their approach

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our little ship-world that has been so long revolving on itself, alone in space, begins to grow as it were nebulous, to feel itself in dissolution. To some this nearing land is interesting because so familiar, to others because so novel and unknown; to some it means home, to others a starting afresh of life, a momentous meeting with an untried Fortune. It may be the end of a holiday, it may be the beginning of one; so everyone's thoughts are already flitting and flying backwards and forwards as far as the sea-birds go; and if any two persons are deeply interested in each other's conversation, be sure the subject of it is the Custom House or tips. There is a turmoil in the cabins, heretofore so silent and deserted during the daylight hours, and men are there with tense calm faces, and women wearing desperate agitated frowns. The last key turned, the last strap secured by the use of every muscle in the human body, booted and spurred—or veiled and reticuled—everyone is on deck just in time for the sunset glory and Table Bay opening out before the ship. There is no more foam on the water; it is all smoothly awash with pale blue and mauve and pink and pure light, aerial almost as the immeasurable sky above. The noble curve of the mountains, now sweeping round us, would seem, but for their craggy outlines, rather a visionary cloud-country than solid rock, so translucent they stand in their vivid rose and opal and blue; here mysteriously in shadow like cherubim folded in their wings, there glowing softly in rosy light like rejoicing seraphim. The mighty flat-topped Table Mountain, with the Devil's Peak, alone remains evidently solid and terrestrial, however heaven-disguised. Three thousand feet and more it rises from the sea—sheer, one would say, if one trusted the report of that specious deceiver the eye, save for a narrow green shelf on which are set tiny white houses. There is something formidable in those tremendous cliffs, those enormous bastions and buttresses of rock burning high above us in the fire of sunset, while at their feet floats a blue haze, woven partly of evening shadows, partly of the smoke of Cape Town.

Now, in spite of the pageant of the sunset, eyes and thoughts are fixed on the wharf, seeking familiar figures or strange ones whose identity shall presently become known. But, however near we approach, whatever 'nods and becks and wreathèd smiles' may be exchanged, we must still wait the pleasure of the usual officials; and indeed of unusual ones also—or so they appear to some of us. We are all passed in single file before an authoritative

Being with a book and pen. What is he there for? He seems to be playing at some game of question and answer, until he suddenly becomes judicial. Having asked the name of a highly respectable middle-aged lady, her age, and husband's status—which might both have reassured him—he sharply demands why she is here without her husband. The reply that he did not start with her does not satisfy, and the statement that she has a son in South Africa is coldly received. Only a solemn asseveration that her lord will join her by the next mail appeases this moral Minos, and she is allowed to pass out with the accepted Shades.

At length, all formalities over, all barriers withdrawn, the friends whose patient forms we have so long watched upon the darkening wharf rush in to claim us—we are whirled away ashore. We have landed; we have touched the soil of a new country. That is a sensation to renew youth within the ribs of Death. But, alas! how rarely now to be procured! There was a time long, long ago, when one counted the number of English counties which one had visited; said to oneself with a thrill of interest, 'This, then, is Devonshire!' or 'I am in Wales!' To gaze upon an ocean or a mountain was to be filled with a fresh sense of the world, of old adventurous lives, and even of the vast heavings and convulsions of the lonely earth before Life was. Then it was the first touch of foreign soil that imparted the thrill of adventure, of an approaching enlarged experience. Each country in succession gives its separate form of intoxication, and there are some who can never land on the French side of the Channel without having to repress an inclination to dance upon the quay, or look down upon the Italian plain without a revival of the old *Sehnsucht*, the old romantic passion for Italy which was the first-love of generations of nineteenth-century youths and maidens. But the joy of first experience inevitably becomes rare and rarer, and it is with a delightful shock that one welcomes its return, and, driving through lighted streets that have in them in truth little that is strange or foreign save the preponderance of brown faces among the passers-by, says to oneself with the old thrill, 'This, then, is Cape Town—I am in South Africa!'

Yet even the glories of 'The Mountain' and of Groote Schuur may not long detain us. The Matoppo beckon, a voice is crying for us in the wilderness of Zimbabwe. Therefore not many times has the red sun risen splendid over the Drakensberg before it beholds

us travelling away from Table Mountain over a low-lying country of fine silver sand. There are fir-trees at first, then only heaths and flowering shrubs: large waxy abundant blooms of the Protea, in all its shades of white, yellow, rose, and a shrub, nameless, to me at least, bearing a blossom with round lemon-coloured petals and a deep brown centre. Yet this is winter. In spring what a garden must be here! Gladiolus in various shades of flame-colour and pink, Cape lilies and many another flower that at home grows exiguous in shelter and a pot, playing the aristocrat, come up in careless crowds, jostling each other, scrambling for room in the world, among all the coarse-growing plants of the waste. The lizard and the hooded snake glide through them, to bask where the white banks lie naked to the sun. Even now our approaching train has frightened them away. In a few minutes we shall have gone by, as thunder goes by, as the myriad little galloping feet of rain go by. Lizard and snake will reappear, shy monarchs of silence and solitude. This solitary reign of theirs is more complete than it was before civilisation came their way; for wild animal life has fled before the white man as it always does fly, except in the case of creatures that can take refuge above his head or under his feet. On this low-lying land, between Table Mountain and the Drakensberg, the Hottentots killed many a buck to barter away to the Dutchmen at Table Bay. But as the white men's farms and vineyards stretched inland, the buck trekked away northwards, and the lions and the leopards went after them, and the great pachyderms went before: all the hosts of the earth gradually retiring on the centre of the African continent, as on some vast fortification prepared for them by Nature. And behind them what a century-long train of wagons has passed across this flowery waste, trekking, trekking ever farther and farther north. And we too are on the Northward Trek. I have met a lady but middle-aged who spent eight months of her youth in making this journey from the Cape into Rhodesia, on which we are now starting. What long, long days, tramping beside the ox-wagon over the endless veldt in the burning sun! What heart-shocks at the sudden discovery of savage neighbours, beasts or men! But also what days and nights of healthful life on the high veldt under magical skies! What hours of ecstasy for the man with the gun in a still-virgin country of Big Game! Yet we hurried children of civilisation must rejoice that it is now only three days' journey up to the great kraal of Lobengula, Bulawayo, which is, being interpreted, the place of

slaughter. There are even those who complain that three days is too long, and ask plaintively if there is no halting-place on the road. There is Kimberley, which comes about midway on the journey, but unless it makes some special appeal to the traveller's interest, it is hardly worth while spending several days there—a week, indeed, if the Bulawayo express is to be caught again. Trains in Rhodesia do not run once an hour or even once a day. They run once, twice, or thrice a week, as the case may be. *En revanche* this Rhodesian express is the most comfortable express in the world. Of American ones I have no experience, but I understand that when Madame Sarah Bernhardt was travelling long distances by them she used to take a coffin about with her. I have felt the need of one myself on board a European express. On the Rhodesian train it is seldom difficult for a lady alone to secure a first-class compartment to herself. Behold her! Not only with all her comforts about her, but with room to use them; without which they are only so many discomforts. There is good service, good food, and owing to the line being well laid and the train not travelling at a high speed, there is no jolting and little vibration. At the end of each carriage a platform with a seat lends variety to railway life; and should the dust drive the traveller within, he can still watch the strange world through which he is passing, from a saloon-carriage specially constructed to give him a view.

About two hours out of Cape Town one comes to a country of bold green hills, under which stand dignified white houses. There are many happily planted clusters of stone-pines, the roads run white and straight through trim fields and meadows. Here is no rude colonial modernity, but rather a survival from a Puritan and Conservative past. At some distance from the station the white houses are grouped into a township; and the station is labelled 'Paarl.' This is the heart of the Ultra-Dutch Colony, and at the same time of the old Huguenot Settlement. It was not by generosity and good treatment that these Frenchmen were brought to exchange their nationality, then the most glorious in Europe, for an inferior one, and to abandon their exquisite world-language for a hideous dialect. No; it was by the pressure of a relentless tyranny that they were transformed. The Dutch Afrikaner still prefers his time-proven practice to our sentimental Anglo-Saxon theory.

If a small but resolute snail were to start from the bottom of the Boboli Gardens, in Florence, and wind its way up to the top of the terraces, it would accomplish a journey faintly

resembling that on which our train starts when it reaches the foot of the mountains beyond Paarl, and crawls up a narrow valley, between steep slopes of boulder-strewn grass and shale, following the windings of a stream. At length it sallies out of a mountain wall by the stream's gate, and is on the flat cultivated floor of the first terrace. In half an hour it is again climbing, this time through a heathy country. They stretch out in retrospect, those hundreds of miles of Cape Colony, from the foot of the Drakensberg to the northern limit of the Karoo, in a panorama the more clearly impressed on the mind because it is not of infinite variety. There is the level veldt, grey or tawny or green, or all three, and the succession of kopjes, flat-topped or peaked, rising steep, detached, like islands from a sea. There under the kopjes are the rare, infinitely solitary, farmhouses; each with its sheltering wood, claiming the eye in a naked landscape. Seen near the kopjes, solitary or linked in mountain walls, are grey and green, like the high parts of the Snowdon range, where the heather does not grow; seen far off they are half the colours on Nature's palette. For these simple features of the earth, almost as little varied as the black and white keys of a piano, are, as it were, the keyboard of a mighty instrument, on which the African heavens are for ever playing in endless succession their fugues and symphonies of colour, gay, gloomy, pensive, gorgeous. Certain points on the road the brain snapshots quite capriciously. On the flat veldt below the Hex River Mountains I saw the Styx, which had come to upper earth and lost itself. It wandered in vague pools and dark narrow rivers, in which coal-black reeds were growing. Dark cattle were wading in the dark water and feeding complacently on this Stygian vegetation. The mountains beyond the marsh lay purple black in the shadow of a storm-cloud, but the soil being reddish in tone, where faint rays of sunshine broke through they were painted with streaks of such a sinister tawny colour that they might have been the barrier Hills of Hell. Farther up, where the railway has climbed on craggy steps nearer the Pass, the little town of Worcester appeals to every passer-by with its smiling English charm, tall church-spire and red roofs, seen against the wildly beautiful background of ultramarine ranges *en coulisses* and noble precipices, whose carved work stands out clear and fair-coloured in the African light.

The beauties of the Hex River Pass I must take on trust, night and cloud having obscured them from my eyes. By it the train

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ascends to the Karoo. Years ago many of us, while having but vague geographical notions of the whereabouts of the Karoo, yet had seen it in a kind of bird's-eye view, flitting over it from thousands of miles away on the magic pages of a book : 'The Story of a South African Farm.' It was a book as much about the sky as the earth, and it was the sky, the firmament, of which the image had graven itself most deeply on my memory. It was the firmament which first awoke me to consciousness of having reached this known, yet unknown country. I awoke from sound sleep with the impression that some one had turned an electric flashlight on to my face. It was the moon, which looked in through a chink in the window-blind. The night was very cold and very very clear. All around was the wide grey silent sea of the Karoo, with isolated shadowy shapes of kopjes standing up on the horizon, like giant ships in full sail. And above it flashed the illimitable splendour of the firmament. In one thing the Karoo disappointed me ; I could not see any Wait-a-bit thorns. Everywhere stretches the low growth of the grey Karoo scrub, kept cropped by sheep which have a morbid appetite for its not very succulent-looking shoots. Dawn shows still a level plain, and on the edge of it peaked kopjes in faint shades of blue and grey. Presently the blues brighten, become transparent, the greys melt into pink, and the sunshine colour, we call gold ; the sunrays steal through the grey Karoo scrub, illuminating the red-sand beneath. So passes the Pageant of the Hours, even Noon, the colour-destroyer, printing its picture on the mind. It does so the more clearly perhaps for a cloud which hangs motionless over a long green kopje in middle distance, laying a dark shadow over one end, where it rises into two grey peaks. Below it stands the usual white farmhouse, with a wood which is not quite usual, for on the edge of it there are two tall dark cypress trees, pointing to the peaks above. Between us and the house a small flock of white and speckled sheep are feeding on the grey scrub, and near the train a group of Kaffirs with a sheep-dog sit in a hollow of the tawny sand. In the high noonlight they seem almost a part of the earth on which they crouch. The men's stained garments are its colour, their brown skins only want a shade of red to be so also. The women's bright kerchiefs mark them out more plainly from the soil. The Kaffirs sit quiescent, observing the train, which is at a standstill. Nothing moves except their glittering eyes and the tip of the rough dog's tail, which keeps on wagging.

The air of the Karoo is superb. A consumptive would

assuredly recover from his disease here, but only to die of *ennui*. I am told that there are some 25,000 square miles of the Karoo. The railway has brought a narrow belt of it in touch with the great human family; but imagine life upon it elsewhere! It is a country to be recommended only to artists, poets, and rudimentary men. Gradually the train takes us away from it to an uninteresting veldt, stony and colourless, with low flat-topped kopjes. But here begins interest of another kind. The names of the stations sound familiar. By a bridge over a river stands a small squat stone tower, looking as new as though it had been built yesterday. It has a protected platform on the top, and is altogether designed for defence, not comfort. Nothing is to be seen from it except the stony veldt, rising in low ridges, the straight railway line, and a thin stream below it, trickling through the stones of its wide bed. This is a block-house, and here men spent week after week guarding the line; for all occupation patrolling the same dreary stretch of it, for all excitement the probability of being 'sniped' from behind some distant boulder. Occasionally a train passed, and still more occasionally it dropped them a packet of old newspapers and magazines. That was a *fête* day! Further along the line there is a grave, infinitely pathetic in its solitariness. 'Peter Plum . . . Suffolk Reg . . . '—the hurrying train permits me to read no more.

Dielfontein, De Aar—the well-known names become real places and are past. Then comes the open, almost flat grass country, among the low ridges and kopjes of which were fought the battles of Belmont, Enslin, and Modder River. At a greater or less distance from the line groups of sad little white crosses come into view and disappear again. The light is failing when we cross the Modder River, but assuredly there is little to see: only an ordinary South African river flowing through a natural cutting in the veldt. It was the very insignificance of the thing that made its potentialities overlooked by the British. And had it not been for the arrival of De la Rey, the Boers also would have overlooked them.

In the neighbourhood of Kimberley a brilliant moon lights only bare, flat veldt; and morning at Mafeking shows the same surroundings. To the lay mind the defence of these places appears to have been the achievement of the impossible. Mafeking in particular looks no more than a collection of tin houses set down on an open plain.

In an hour or two we reach some low green hills which lie between the white man's country and the country of the Bechuana chiefs.

I cannot be sure whether it was here or on some hills on the southern frontier of British Bechuanaland that a strange thing happened in the year 1901. The chief Galishwe and his whole tribe, at that time living along the hills, had a vision, which they all saw in full daylight. They saw a great Impi of white men marching across the sky. Northward it marched, hour after hour, and hour after hour the Bechuanas watched it, until as evening drew on it disappeared. And the chief Galishwe went and told this to the white men, whom it seemed to concern rather than his own people. But the white men could not interpret the vision. To me it seems possible that since mirage is not unknown in Bechuanaland, the Great White Impi may have been nearly related to the Flying Dutchman.

From these hills we emerge into Dark Africa. Clusters of round huts, clay-walled, grass-thatched, appear, with half-naked negroes standing at their doors. One expects to see Livingstone appear also with a large straw hat, a ragged beard, a stick, and a Bible in his hand. The brown veldt is now covered with bare, stunted thorn-trees, standing apart from each other, and there are little patches of native cultivation. From huts within reach of the stations come companies of black people to stare at the train, and also to sell their wares. These Bechuanas are almost the only natives who have anything except edibles to sell. At Lobatsi and Mochudi the traveller may buy for from 6*l.* to 8*l.* beautifully dressed 'karosses' or fur rugs, made of the skins of the silver jackal and other wild creatures. Also rough but highly characteristic wooden animals—sable-antelope, giraffe, guinea-fowl. These, with the exception of some ingenious human figures, made for a white man in Northern Rhodesia, are the only Bantu works of art I have ever seen or heard of. They resemble so much in character the drawings of the Bushmen, which are scattered over the rocks of South Africa, that one asks whether this art also may not have been originally the yellow man's, and learnt from him by this branch of the conquering Bantu.

Here in Bechuanaland of the Bechuanas one has reached a land where the black man is not domesticated, parasitic, but still living his own life. The Kaffir youths who run hither and thither, lightly clad in a small skin, have the aimless activity, the bounding grace of young animals. Their limbs are slight yet rounded like those of Greek bronzes. The graver elders in their blankets seem to have come out of engravings in 'Livingstone's Travels.' The women

selling fruit are gorgeous in pinks and yellows and peacock-blues beyond any seen before, and they have a freer, finer carriage than those of Cape Colony.

The train forges steadily ahead through a country growing ever more African, more savage and solitary. There is something of the wild incongruity of a dream in seeing this travel-book country from a train. Now for an hour or two windows, shutters, doors have to be closed, to shut out the fine red dust which is always moving in this dry belt of land, like a *tourment* in a circle of the Inferno. Shut what you will, it filters through, and it is a prudent precaution before entering this region to cover up everything that matters with everything that does not matter—such as Cape Town newspapers. The train emerges from the dust-cloud into a country of alternating white sand and bush—that is, woods in general appearance not unlike our own when an autumnal gale has swept some trees bare and left others golden, while some are still deep green. The stations are now no more than watering-places for the engine. I remember one which we reached towards sundown; just where a wide desert plain broke into bush. Two or three blanketed savages stand at gaze in the deep white sand; apart from them is one Englishman, young, grave, upright, smart in his khaki uniform. On a gentle rise to the right of the train stands a tin house with a garden and a native hut. A flourishing colony of Leghorn fowls are sallying out from behind the tin hut, under the leadership of a fine cock. The lodge in the wilderness, the garden, the fowls are his, the grave young man's, and he is grave because he is bearing the white man's burden—well, doubtless, as they do, these young sons of ours, in their appalling solitudes. A green plant is sprawling over a bank, and from it some vividly green pumpkins have rolled on to the silver sand. Two or three cheerful young men, passengers from the train, begin a game, pelting each other with the green pumpkins. On the other side of the line, low in the sky, an enormous distorted crimson sun, like a fire-balloon, is spilling blood-red light into a long pool which has a grove of tall trees at one end and is half-covered with some grey-blue water-plant. The train moves. What then? It has moved several times before. But a kind fellow-traveller outside a carriage shrieks. He does more than shriek; he jumps down, hurls me on to the train, and jumps on again, all in the space of ten seconds. As to the cheerful young men, for all I know, as the fairy stories say, they may be playing with the pumpkins in the sand unto this day.

CARDINAL.

THE STORY OF MY FIRST CAGED BIRD.

A *ONCE* familiar but long unheard sound coming unexpectedly to us will sometimes affect the mind as it is occasionally affected through the sense of smell, restoring a past scene and state so vividly that it is less like a memory than a vision. It is indeed more than a vision, seeing that this is an illusion, something apparently beheld with the outer or physical eyes; the other is a transformation, a return to that state—that forgotten self—which was lost for ever, yet is ours again; and for a glorious moment we are what we were in some distant place, some long-vanished time, in age and freshness of feeling, in the brilliance of our senses, our wonder and delight at this visible world.

Recently I had an experience of that kind on hearing a loud, glad, bird-note or call from overhead when walking in a London West-end thoroughfare. It made me start and stand still; when, casting up my eyes, I caught sight of the bird in its cage, hanging outside a first-floor window. It was the beautiful cardinal of many memories.

This is a bird of the finch family of southern South America—about the size of a starling, but more gracefully shaped, with a longer tail; the whole upper plumage clear blue-grey, the underparts pure white; the face, throat, and a high pointed crest an intense brilliant scarlet.

It had actually seemed to me at the moment of hearing, then of seeing it, that the bird had recognised me as one from the same distant country—that its loud call was a glad greeting to a fellow-exile seen by chance in a London thoroughfare. It was even more than that: this was my own bird, dead so many, many years, living again, knowing me again so far from home, in spite of all the changes that time had wrought in me. And he, my own cardinal, the first cardinal I ever knew, remembered it all even as I did—all the little incidents of our life together; the whole history was in both our minds at that same moment of recognition.

I was a boy, not yet nine years old, when my mother took me on one of her yearly visits to Buenos Ayres. It was a very long day's

journey for us in those pre-railroad times ; for, great and prosperous as that city and republic now are, it was not so then, when the people were divided, calling themselves Reds and Whites (or Blues), and were occupied in cutting one another's throats.

In Buenos Ayres we stayed at the house of an English missionary clergyman, in a street near the waterside. He was a friend of my parents and used to come out with his family to us in the summer, and in return my mother made his house her home for a month or so in winter. This was my first visit, and I remember the house was like a luxurious palace to my simple mind accustomed to rude surroundings. It had a large paved courtyard, with ornamental shrubs and orange and lemon trees growing in it, and many prettily decorated rooms ; also a long passage or balcony at the back, and, at its far end, facing the balcony, the door of the study. This balcony at the back had an irresistible attraction for me, for on the wall were hung many cages containing beautiful birds, some unknown to me. There were several canaries, a European goldfinch, and other kinds ; but the bird that specially attracted me was a cardinal in fine plumage, with a loud, glad, musical call-note—just such a note as that with which the bird in a London thoroughfare had pierced my heart. But it did not sing, and I was told that it had no song except that one note, or not more than two or three notes, and that it was kept solely for its beauty. To me it was certainly most beautiful.

Every day during our six or seven weeks' visit I used to steal out to the balcony and stand by the hour watching the birds, above all the cardinal with his splendid scarlet crest, thinking of the joy it would be to possess such a bird. But though I could not keep away from the spot, I was always ill at ease when there, always glancing apprehensively at the closed door at the end—for it was a glass door, and in his study behind it the clergyman, a grave studious man, was sitting over his books. It made me tremble to think that, though invisible to me in that dim interior, he would be able to see me through the glass, and, worse still, that at any moment he might throw open the door and come out to catch me gazing at his birds. Nor was this feeling strange in the circumstances, for I was a timid, somewhat sensitive little boy, and he a very big stern man with a large, clean-shaved, colourless face that had no friendliness in it ; nor could I forget an unhappy incident which occurred during his visit to us in the country more than half a year before. One day, rushing in, I stumbled in the verandah and struck my head

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against the door-handle, and, falling down, was lying on the floor crying loudly with the pain, when the big stern man came on the scene. 'What's the matter with you?' he demanded. 'Oh, I've hit my head on the door and it hurts me so!' I sobbed.

'Does it?' he said, with a grim smile. 'Well, it doesn't hurt me,' and, stepping over me, he went in.

What wonder that I was apprehensive, would shrink almost in terror, when by chance he came suddenly out to find me there, and, after staring or glaring at me through his gold-rimmed glasses for a few moments, would pass me by without a word or smile? How strange, how unnatural, it seemed that this man I feared and hated should be a lover of birds and the owner of that precious cardinal!

The long visit came to an end at last, and, glad to return to the birds I had left—to the purple cow-birds, the yellow-breasted and the crimson-breasted troupials, the tyrant birds, the innumerable sweet-voiced little crested song-sparrows, and a hundred more—yet sad to leave the cardinal which I admired and had grown to love above all birds, I was taken back to my distant home on the great green plains. So passed the winter, and the swallow returned and the peach-trees blossomed once more; the long, long, dry, hot summer season followed; then autumn—the three beautiful months of March, April, and May, when the sunshine was soft and we were among the trees, feasting on ripe peaches every day and all day long.

Then again winter and the annual visit to the distant town; but none of us children were taken on this occasion. My mother's return after one of these long absences was always a great joy and festival to us children. To have her with us again, and the toys and the books and delicious things she brought us, made us wild with happiness; and on this occasion she brought me something compared with which all the other gifts—all the gifts I had ever received in my life were as nothing. She had a large object covered from sight with a shawl, and, drawing me to her side, asked me if I remembered my visit to the city over a year ago, and how the birds at the parsonage had attracted me? Well, our friend the clergyman, she went on to say, had gone back to his own country and would never return. His wife, who was a very gentle, sweet woman, had been my mother's dearest friend, so that she could hardly speak of her loss without tears. Before going away he distributed his birds among his closest friends. He was anxious that every bird should have an owner who would love it as much as he had loved it himself

and tend it as carefully ; and remembering how he had observed me day after day watching the cardinal, he thought that he could not leave it in better hands than mine. And here was the bird in its big cage !

The cardinal was mine ! How could I believe it, even when I pulled the shawl off and saw the beautiful creature once more and heard the loud note ! The gift of that bird from the stern ice-cold man who had looked at me as if he hated me, even as I had certainly hated him, now seemed the most wonderful thing which had ever happened in the world.

It was a blissful time for me during that late winter season, when I lived for the bird ; then, as the days grew longer and brighter with the return of the sun, I was happier every day to see my cardinal's increasing delight in his new surroundings. It was certainly a great and marvellous change for him. The cardinals are taken as fledglings from the nests in forests on the upper waters of the Plata river, and reared by hand by the natives, then sent down to the bird-dealers in Buenos Ayres ; so that my bird had practically known only a town life, and was now in a world of greenest grass and foliage, wide blue skies, and brightest sunshine for the first time. By day his cage was hung under the grape-vines outside the verandah ; there the warm fragrant wind blew on him and the sun shone down through the translucent red and green young vine-leaves. He was mad with excess of joy, hopping wildly about in his cage, calling loudly in response to the wild birds in the trees, and from time to time bursting out in song : not the three or four to half a dozen notes the cardinal usually emits, but a continuous torrent, like the soaring lark's, so that those who heard it marvelled, and exclaimed that they had never known a cardinal with such a song. I can say for myself that I have, since then, listened to the singing of hundreds of cardinals, both wild and caged, and never heard one with a song so passionate and sustained.

So it went on from day to day, until the vine-leaves, grown large, spread a green roof to keep the hot sun from him—a light roof of leaves which, stirred by the wind, still let the sparkling sunbeams fall through to enliven him, while outside the sheltering vines the bright world was all before him. If any person, even the wisest, had then told me that my cardinal was not the happiest bird in the world—that not being free to fly he could not be as happy as others—I should not have believed it ; consequently it came as a shock to me when one day I discovered the cage empty—that my cardinal

had made his escape ! The cage, as I have said, was large, and the wires were so far apart that a bird the size of a linnet or siskin could not have been confined in it ; but for the larger cardinal it was a safe prison. Unfortunately one of the wires had become loose—perhaps the bird had loosened it—and by working at it he had succeeded in bending it and finally had managed to squeeze through and make his escape. Running out into the plantation, I was soon apprised of his whereabouts by his loud call-note ; but though he could not fly, but only hop and flutter from branch to branch—his wings never having been exercised—he refused to be caught. I was advised to wait until he was hungry, then to try him with the cage. This I did, and, taking the cage, placed it on the ground under the trees and retired a few paces, holding it open by means of a string which when released would cause the door to fly to. He became greatly excited on seeing the cage, and being very hungry soon came down to the ground and, to my joy, hopped up to it. But he did not go in : it seemed to me that he was considering the matter, if the state he was in of being pulled in opposite directions by two equally importunate impulses may be so described. ‘ Must I go in and satisfy my hunger—and live in prison ; or stay out and keep my freedom and go hungry ? ’ He stood at the door of the cage, looking in at the seed, then turned and looked at me and at the trees, then looked at the seed again, and raised and lowered his shining crest and flitted his wings and tail, and was excited and in two minds and a quandary ; finally, after taking one more look at the tempting seed, he deliberately flew or fluttered up to the nearest branch, then to another, and so on, till he had gone to the very top of the tree, as if to get as far from the tempting cage as he could !

It was a great disappointment, and I now determined to hunt him down ; for it was late in the day, and he was not a cunning wild bird to save himself from rats and owls and black and yellow opossums and other subtle enemies who would come presently on the scene. I hunted him from the first tree on to the next, then to another, until I had driven him out of the plantation to an open place, where he fluttered over the surface until he came to the bank of the huge ditch or foss, about twelve feet deep and half as wide as the Regent’s Canal. He would drop into it, I thought, and I would then be able to capture him ; but after a moment’s rest on the bank he rose and succeeded in flying across, pitching on the other side. ‘ Now I have him ! ’ I exclaimed, and, getting over the foss, I was

quickly in hot pursuit after him ; for outside the foss the earth spread out level and treeless, with nothing but grass and giant thistles growing on it. But his wings were now getting stronger with exercise, and he led me on and on for about a mile, then disappeared in a clump of giant thistles, growing on a warren or village of the vizcachas—the vizcacha being a big rodent that lives in communities in a dozen or twenty huge burrows, their mouths placed close together. He had escaped down one of these holes, and I waited in vain for him to come out, and in the end was compelled to go home without him.

I don't know if I slept that night, but I was up and out an hour before sunrise, and, taking the cage, set out to look for him, with little hope of finding him, for there were foxes in that place—a family of cubs which I had seen—and, worse still, the large blood-thirsty black weasels of that country. But no sooner was I at the spot where I had lost him than I was greeted with his loud note. And there he was, hopping out from among the thistles, a most forlorn-looking object, his plumage wet and draggled, and his feet thickly covered with wet clay ! And he was glad to see me ! As soon as I put the cage down he came straight to it and, without a moment's hesitation, hopped in and began feasting on the seed.

It was a happy ending. My bird had had a lesson which he would not forget ; there would be no more tugging at the wires, nor would he ever wish to be free again. So I imagined. But I was wrong. From that time the bird's disposition was changed : ever in a restless anxious state, he would flit from side to side of his cage, chirping loudly, but never singing—never one note ; the gladness that had made him sing so wonderfully had quite gone out of him. And invariably, after hopping about for a few moments, he would go back to the wire which had been loosened, and bent—the one weak spot which was now repaired—and tug at and shake it again. And at last, greatly to my surprise, he actually succeeded in bending the same wire once more and making his escape !

Once more I went to look for him with the cage in my hand, but when I found him he refused to be tempted. I left him for a day to starve, then tried him again ; and then again many and many times on many following days, for he was now much too strong on the wing to be hunted down ; but though he invariably greeted and appeared to welcome me with his loud chirp, he refused to come down, and after excitedly hailing me and flirting his feathers for a few moments he would fly away.

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Gradually I grew reconciled to my loss, for, though no longer my captive—my own bird—he was near me, living in the plantation and frequently seen. Often and often, at intervals of a few or of many days, when my lost, yet not wholly lost, cardinal was not in my mind, I would come upon him, sometimes out on the plain, feeding with a flock of purple cow-birds, or yellow-breasted troupials, or some other species; and when they would all rise up and fly away at my approach, he alone, after going a little distance with them, would drop out of the crowd and pitch on a stalk or thistle-bush, just, as it would appear, to look at me and hail me with his loud note—to say that he remembered me still; then off he would fly after the others.

That little action of his went far to reconcile me to his loss—to endear him still more to me, changing my boyish bitterness to a new and strange kind of delight in his happiness.

But the end of the story is not yet: even at this distance, after so many changing and hardening years, I experience a certain reluctance or heaviness of heart in telling it.

The warm bright months went by and it was winter again—the cold season from May to August, when the trees are bare, the rainy south wind blows, and there are frosty nights, frosts that would sometimes last all day or even several days. Then it was that I missed my bird and wondered often what had become of him. Had he too flown north to a warmer country with the swallows and other migrants? It could not be believed. But he was no longer in the plantation—that little sheltering island of trees in the level grassy sea-like plain; and I should never see him more or know what his fate had been.

One day, in August, the men employed about the place were engaged in a grand annual campaign against the rats—a sort of spring-cleaning in and out of doors. The shelter of the huge old foss, and of the trees and thickets, wood-piles, many outbuildings and barns full of raw or untanned hides, attracted numbers of these unpleasant little beasts and made it a sort of rats' metropolis; and it was usual to clear them out in early spring before the new grass and herbage sprang up and covered the ground. They were suffocated with smoke, made deadly with brimstone and tobacco, pumped into their holes. I was standing by one of the men who was opening one of the runs after the smoking process, when I caught sight of a gleam of scarlet colour in a heap of straw and rubbish he was turning over with his spade, and, jumping down, I picked up the shining red

object. It was my lost cardinal's crest ! And there too were his grey wing and tail feathers, white feathers from his breast, and even some of his bones. Alas ! he had found it too cold to roost in the naked trees in the cold wind and rain, and, seeking a more sheltered roosting-place on the ground, had been caught and carried into its den and devoured by a rat.

I experienced a second and greater grief at his miserable end—a feeling so poignant that the memory has endured till now. For he was my loved cardinal—my first caged bird. And he was also my last. I could have no other, the lesson he had taught me having sunk into my heart—the knowledge that to a bird too the world is very beautiful and liberty very sweet. I could even rejoice, when time had softened my first keen sorrow, that my cardinal had succeeded in making his escape, since at the last he had experienced those miraculous months of joyous existence, living the true bird-life for which nature had fashioned and fitted him. In all the years of his captivity he could never have known such a happiness, nor can any caged bird know it, however loudly and sweetly it may sing to win a lump of sugar or a sprig of groundsel from its tender-hearted keeper and delude him with the idea that it is well with his prisoner—that no injustice has been done.

W. H. HUDSON.

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*HUMANISTIC EDUCATION NOT WITHOUT
LATIN.*

SEVERAL classes of persons are now attacking classical study. Many of those who are chiefly interested in other subjects, such as natural science, seem to hate classics violently, with an intolerance greater than the classical man ever felt for them. A far larger class consists of those who think that no subject is worth study unless it will 'help my son in his future career,' to use the regular phrase; by which they always mean, help him to earn money directly. To do them justice, they apply the same standard to other subjects, amongst which, in my experience as a headmaster, I find as 'useless to my son in his future career,' French, German, Geometry, Natural Science, Geography, Shakespeare, English, and Scripture. A third class consists of those educated men and women who are disquieted by the poor results of classical teaching.

Mr. Benson's paper in the February CORNHILL is one of the voices of the last class. With much of it I cordially agree. His statements of fact are often accurate, so far as my own observation goes; but in the causes assigned we disagree, and I do not admit the tacit assumptions on which he bases his proposed remedy. In venturing to criticise these I have one small advantage: Mr. Benson's remedy has not been tried, but mine has; and in what follows I draw on experience. The views I hold were not preconceived, but they come from trying one remedy after another for admitted faults, until a system evolved itself that would work.

I agree that classics cannot be profitably studied by the wrong persons—that is by those who are unfitted to study them. There are many such in all secondary schools; and a wise educational system would sort them out and put them to the work they are fitted for. Many of them are fitted for skilled manual work, which they do to admiration; others for machinery, for commerce, for farming and pioneering, for fighting; some for mathematics and science of a more narrow kind, although I have known very few who could be really eminent in these subjects who were not also fitted to profit from literary studies at the same time. It is one of

our problems what to do with these boys, and our great difficulty here lies with the parents, who are often angry if they are told the truth, however courteously, and however much to their boys' own profit. But I do not agree that boys of average ability are unfitted for classical study: I should draw the line much lower than Mr. Benson does.

Mr. Benson next brings in compulsory Greek, and calls it a farce to keep a subject compulsory for the entrance of passmen to a university, without requiring it to be studied after entrance. If so, it is a farce to require of them a knowledge of the English language and the power to read and write, all which are so compulsory, and none are studied after entrance. Greek must stand or fall by other arguments than this: the matter may be dismissed now because it has nothing to do with our question.

The criticisms that follow are directed against the methods of teaching, where again I agree. Mr. Benson justly blames the inhuman jargon that is used in translating foreign languages, and nowhere else on sea or land; I have spoken quite as strongly myself on this head. The remark applies equally, I may add, to French and German with Latin and Greek. Mr. Benson objects to the mosaic method of translation into Latin, and asks, How many boys, who have studied Latin several hours a week for ten years, could describe the most ordinary event in grammatical or intelligible Latin? The answer is, Very few: and the reason is just that they have studied Latin so many hours a week for ten years; but if they have studied Latin properly five hours a week for three years, they can and do describe ordinary events in grammatical and intelligible Latin, quite commonly without any mistakes at all. The excess of time is one chief cause of failure. The method of free composition, which Mr. Benson mentions with approval, so far from being given up, is regular in teaching modern languages, and has proved to be equally effective with the ancient. It is true that the pressure of subjects injures the work of schools; but the remedy is not to discard one or more subjects: the remedy is to rearrange the subjects so that they lead up one to another, when time can be found, and is found, for all. The complaint that boys cannot reason is just; but I am not sure that Latin is not a help towards teaching them to reason. Nor indeed is Mr. Benson, who admits that it might be a help if free composition were used. At least Latin is invaluable for teaching attention. Let me quote the unsolicited testimonial of a boy whom I had once in my house, a very ordinary

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boy, who, after taxing his brains for an hour, looked up with a smile of admiration, and said: 'Talk of concentration of mind! If you want concentration of mind, give me Latin prose. Just stop thinking for one minute, and you're done.' I shall not deal with the use of Latin as an aid to the Romance languages, though that is very real, because I advocate learning French before Latin, and I wish to defend Latin on its merits; but with the next point again I heartily agree. Annotated school-books are the very devil; but the remedy is easy—use plain texts. I disagree, however, as to Mr. Benson's view of Latin literature; the authors he likes he thinks too difficult, but surely he underrates others. *Cæsar*, for example, is dull if taken fifteen lines at a lesson; so at that rate would be Mr. Benson's most interesting books. Try to split up the *Dolly Dialogues*, or Mr. W. W. Jacobs, as for a lower middle form, and I defy you to find any sparkle in them. But take *Cæsar* in the lump, and I doubt if a more absorbing book could be found. Then take *Pliny's Letters*, or certain books of *Virgil*, or, for the more advanced, *Plautus* and *Lucretius*, or the more modern Latin of *Erasmus* and *Hall*; there is plenty of real interest in Latin, provided only you don't take it in snippets, and that you have taught the Latin from the first as a real language—that is, as a means to express thought, not as a jig-saw puzzle.

For it is here that I see the crucial point: Latin must be real; it must be taught, that is, on the direct method. If anyone urges that this cannot be done, I reply that it can be done and is done; and I very much regret that any critic can be found, as so many do, to deny this, without examining the facts. In education, as in politics, there is a lamentable habit of stating opinions as though they were facts, and very little desire to find out the truth. This levity in the use of words is not an English characteristic, and I believe it to be due largely to the disgraceful state of both elementary and secondary education, the effects of a generation of bad teaching. A generation, I say, because the methods and the curriculum which I deplore equally with Mr. Benson do not go farther back than the seventies, and they were only perfected as an engine of mischief within the memory of most of us.

I now proceed briefly to suggest a remedy for the defects which Mr. Benson has very properly pointed out. They are: a new modelling of the course of work, and a change of methods.

First, we must have a time-table in due proportion, so arranged that each important subject has its place, that each has time

enough, and that none preponderates over the others. Secondly, we must have a succession of subjects, so as not to overload the learner. Thirdly, we must have better methods.

When new subjects are introduced, we need a lesson a day, not less, and not much more, though at the first entry of a new language we may give extra lessons for a short time with advantage. I assume that our course covers the whole school life—a most important point, which is well brought out in the lately published Buff Book on the German Reformed Gymnasien. It is useless for the public school to try to educate boys, without regulating the course of the various preparatory schools that feed it. The entrance examination will do a great deal towards this ; but because it is a fact generally lost sight of, that the boy is made or marred as a rule before he gets to the public school (where his average stay is about four years), for that reason I wish to repeat, that all attempts at reforming public schools from the top are foredoomed to failure.

The general lines of our course I would suggest as follow. For the earliest years, up to nine or ten, no language but English would be taught or used. I ought to make it clear that these ages are those of the boy of average intelligence ; they really mean stages, which clever boys pass through quicker and dull boys slower. This is the time when the mind is eager for new facts, and the imagination needs to be fed with stories, legends, and the wonders of nature. The use of the English language must be taught thoroughly, beginning with articulation, and including clear and expressive speech, reading aloud, and singing. At this stage books are less useful than ear and eye, and it is an age that delights in acting. The elements of grammar must be taught here ; but composition should be synthetic rather than analytic. The hand needs also to be trained, by drawing, brushwork, modelling, basket-making, netting, and other such things, all which are delightful to the learner. He must do a great deal of mental arithmetic, and learn such mathematics as he can with the aid of models : fractions for example, weights, measures, coinage.

At nine or ten I would begin French, taught phonetically. Experiments have been made by our staff as to the age for beginning French, and we find no advantage in beginning earlier : those who began at seven or eight were in about the same stage at twelve as those who began at nine or ten.

We also tried Latin at this stage, taught on the same principle :

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we found that both Latin and French suffered, and we therefore dropped it. At twelve I would begin Latin; from this time on there will be at least a lesson a day given to mathematical subjects, and two or three lessons a week to natural history, until the physics and chemistry begin. Of these subjects I shall say little more, but confine my attention chiefly to the languages. English subjects, it will be seen, still have more than twenty lessons (of three-quarters of an hour) a week, singing, drawing, and handiwork being continued as far as may be. By fourteen, the boy of average ability will be at about the same stage in Latin as in French, because, being more mature and trained, he gets on faster. Here the boy who is meant for business takes German; the boy who is meant for the university takes Greek. At sixteen the former class of boy may leave; the latter is ready for the sixth form, when he drops his French as a class subject, taking German instead, but keeping up French for his use and amusement by reading it; about two-thirds of his time is now given for three years to any special subject he may take up, and the literary or mathematical and scientific work to balance it may be arranged to suit each case. By nineteen he has had what I venture to think is a liberal education, and can enter the university without calling for Mr. Benson's criticism. He will not, I venture to maintain, write school jargon instead of English, nor will he lack in the power to arrange ideas and reason justly. The clever boy, who has arrived at the last stage by fifteen or even fourteen years of age, will compete (and does compete) with success for open scholarships in his own subject. And in winning his scholarship he will not have sacrificed his intellectual quality: he will have a thorough knowledge of English, French, and German, and, better still, he will have learnt how to learn.

Such a result, however, depends not a little on the method. As I have already said, the direct method is the only one that can give first-rate results. That method does not, as our critics so often say, consist of nursery prattle, neglecting grammar or exact knowledge; on the contrary, it teaches grammar and scholarship by use, both in speech and in writing, and attains a very high standard of accuracy at every stage; this it is in brief—that each language is taught alone and through itself, translation from it into English and from English into each language being the final stage, and not the intermediate means.

I very much dislike saying so much of our own experience; but

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it cannot be helped, because when I do not refer to experience, but only state principles, I am told at once that it is easy to prophesy. One critic has gone so far as to say that no one would ever adopt such methods until they had been proved to be right, which is as much as to say no one would ever go into the water until he had learnt to swim. They have, however, now been found to be right, and there is no excuse for any one who refuses to examine the proofs. My own desire is solely to improve the conditions of education in England, and it would give me great pleasure if I could avoid mentioning my own school.

Here, then, you have an alternative to Humanism without Latin. On the one hand is negation and destruction; on the other hand is construction. Many points of difficulty still remain to be cleared up; faults in plenty remain, but there is no reason why they should not be cleared away by honest and persistent endeavours. We need more brains in the work, and first-rate brains; I will not say the brains of a cabinet minister, as men used to say, but the brains of a judge. If the able men in the scholastic profession would set their minds to it, instead of shutting their eyes to facts or indulging in complaints, it would not be long before the intrinsic merits of the classical training should become once more as clear as they were in the days of Pitt.

W. H. D. ROUSE.

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'NEATH BLUER SKIES.

A TRAVELLER, especially an inexperienced traveller, whose senses are as yet undulled by a surfeit of varieties, should always cherish in his diary his first impressions of new lands. Indeed, it is wise to have a note-book ready to receive the vivid account before ever the great ship sights land, lest the fine bouquet should evaporate. The first impression which Western Australia makes upon the traveller fresh from home is nothing very subtle or mystical. If he arrives in summer-time his strongest sensation will be of glaring sunshine.

With half-shut eyes and screwed-up lids, he hands his baggage over to the agents, and decides that all harbours are very much alike except in the matter of size, and so takes train to Perth, twelve miles away. During the next half-hour he will gain his second undying impression of Australia from the names of the stations. It is only the very new chum who, from the conspicuous lettering, jumps to the conclusion that every place is called 'So-and-so's Schnapps'; the ordinary person perceives that this is but an appeal to the thirsty (and, indeed, Australian thirst has a quality and quantity peculiarly its own), but will be struck by the quaint mixture of localities. Fremantle, the port, fitly commemorates a gallant sailor; Cottesloe and Claremont are names which have evidently been imported from England; Karrakatta must certainly be aboriginal (later investigation shows that it was the original name of Perth, and signifies the place of crabs); Subiaco advertises a European sponsor, probably the Superior of some Order; Leederville has an American twang about it, blending with a flavour of local history.

This jumble of names, ancient and modern, British, foreign, local, and native, is characteristic of Australia. Travelling to the Coolgardie goldfields the train passes through Kellandi, Karalee, Gilgai, Koorarawalgee, and other places where one would think that stationmasters with specially shaped vocal organs must reside. A hundred miles farther on Kalgoorlie is reached, with its neighbours Hannan Street, Williamstown, Cræsus, Brown Hill, and Trafalgar. Go south and you will leave Spencer's Brook, York, and Beverley behind you, to plunge into Popanyinning, Peringillup,

Tambellup, and to conclude with Torbay Junction, Grassmere, and Albany.

All the names speak of history, sometimes of the history of the pioneers who first braved and conquered the bush, sometimes of their love of home, and sometimes of their necessities. If cattle strayed it was not much use to ask a native if they were likely to be found at Burges'; to him all English names were equally meaningless. Ask him if they were at Moojebing or Mummballup, and he would understand; and so the names became fixed.

But this study of time-tables will have brought the newcomer to Perth, where he will realise in himself a delusion which no amount of subsequent experience will correct. With a hasty glance at the sun, and quite forgetting that he has crossed the Equator since he lost sight of Ceylon, so that sunrise is now on the right instead of on the left, he will once for all decide that in his mind the east lies where the map declares the west to be, and that the rest of the points of the compass are equally confused and confusing. The discovery in the evening that the moon is upside down, and rises in what ought to be the west, is a blow for which no amount of reflection on parallels of latitude will ever console him.

If harbours all the world over are very much alike, so also English-speaking cities have a family resemblance. Each, of course, has its differentiations, and Perth has an amazing series of telephone wires carried on jarrah posts. If, by a miracle, a snowfall came, the whole ugly system would collapse; but unfortunately there is no snow. Beyond this, the almost unbroken line of verandahs in the main streets tells of hot summers and a heavy winter rainfall.

Probably the newly arrived will jump to the conclusion that Perth is a city which undergoes chronic rebuilding. In fact, Perth exists in three stages. There is antediluvian Perth, some of it quite seventy years old, whose picturesque houses, innocent of damp-courses or foundations, remind the visitor of country cottages at home. These, alas! are rapidly disappearing. Of a little later date are substantial old-fashioned, deep-gardened, comfortable residences, designed by Engineer officers and built in the old Crown Colony days by convict labour. Next in point of history are shops in the main thoroughfares, which were evidently rushed up in the boom time, and now appear shabby and out of date. And there are, cheek by jowl with these, fine business premises and large stores which give promise of the Perth that is to be.

These three stages in the evolution of building correspond with

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three stages in the evolution of the city's life. Thirty years ago Perth, though the capital of a colony with an area of a million square miles, was really a village which happened to be a seat of Government, or, if it be preferred, a seat of Government which happened to be a village.

The Governor and his Council and the heads of departments formed the backbone of society, and the old West Australian families held all the land and all the positions. Everybody knew everybody else, and enjoyed all the friendliness and all the tiny affairs and excitements and petty quarrels of a self-contained community, where births, engagements (actual and prospective), marriages, and deaths, and all the events of life are common property and of compelling interest. To this period and the preceding half-century, during which cows sought pasture along the sides of the main thoroughfare of the city, belong the old cottages and houses.

Self-government was granted to the Colony of Western Australia, and the local Press dates progress from that hour. But another fact, for which elective Parliaments are hardly responsible, really transformed Perth, and a great deal more than Perth.

Early in the 'nineties gold was discovered at Coolgardie. Many experienced prospectors had fared wearily over the waterless red expanse and through the endless scrub without discovering the hidden treasures, for the formation is utterly different from that of the other famous gold-bearing areas of Australia; but at last the discovery was made and the rush began. Victoria was suffering from the ruinous collapse that had followed certain wild land speculations, and Victorians predominated in the thousands who flocked to the West. Ten thousand a week is said to have been the average of arrivals in Perth at the height of the tide, and the effect upon the Capital Village can be imagined. The typhoid that followed can be imagined, too.

Miles of ramshackle houses sprang up like mushrooms; land values shot up like Jack's beanstalk.

It was well enough for men, for they came with money, and were welcomed at the innumerable boarding-houses; but times were hard for the hundreds of girls who came to seek fortune in the Golden West. A former Dean of Perth tells how respectable women would beg for leave to camp on his verandah, having no other shelter; for the boarding-house keepers would refuse women, thinking to get larger profits with less trouble from the men.

On the goldfields themselves the rush was immense. Fresh

discoveries succeeded each other with rapidity, and each new discovery heralded a new rush. Kalgoorlie, The Boulder, and Kanowna were within easy reach of Coolgardie, but none was within easy reach of Perth. A railway went as far as Southern Cross, where gold had been found in earlier years, but the remaining hundred miles had to be compassed on camels, on bicycles, or on foot, with wheelbarrows, or with a 'humped bluey'—i.e. a blanket, into which worldly goods were rolled, strapped on to the shoulders. Mining camps broke out. Coolgardie promised itself and the world that it would be the city of the future, and laid itself out in streets worthy of its intentions. Bubble companies were floated in London and burst in due time, spattering quite undeservedly the fair fame of Australia. Fortunes were made and fortunes were lost, and Western Australia was reborn.

To this period belong the business streets of Perth and hundreds of ill-built houses.

The great rush died down; the goldfields steadied themselves; dry-blowing and washing for gold gave place to deep-level mining and elaborate machinery. Presently the bottom dropped out of Coolgardie, while Kalgoorlie forged ahead. The stone and brick buildings of the quondam city of the future remained where they were, while the wood-and-iron homes were hoisted on to trolleys for removal to the new centres.

Meanwhile the tide began to recede in Perth. For a long time money was plentiful, for the goldfields had to be supplied, no matter whether Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie were top sawyer. A great engineering feat dammed the Helena River into an artificial lake and pumped water 350 miles to the thirsty miners and thirstier machinery. Till this was accomplished soda-water was a cheaper medium for washing than stored rainwater on the 'Fields. When the scheme was in working order not only were man and beast and boiler supplied, but exquisite gardens began to bloom in the rich but dry ground.

Simultaneously the railhead pressed steadily to the East, while thousands of pounds' worth of machinery and goods passed through Perth, so that the State exchequer overflowed, merchants prospered, prices were inflated, and Perth still thought that the Millennium had come.

Perth was mistaken. Slowly things settled down on the goldfields to a business footing, where fractions per cent. were calculated with care, while the rush of population dwindled. But it was hard

for people to realise that the crest of the boom had passed, and that money was no longer as plentiful as the endless sand of the country.

Then came Federation, with its abolition of Interstate Customs. Special treatment was allowed to Western Australia, which for a while received disproportionate returns from the Federal revenue; but presently the pinch began to be felt. Slowly still, but inevitably, competition with the Eastern States made itself realised. Now that Interstate duties were abolished, and Interstate Free Trade with Protection against the rest of the world had come, the infant spoon-fed manufactories of Western Australia, with their crushing wages bills, were ruined by the spoon-fed giants of Victoria, where wages were lower. Western Australia felt all the disadvantages of Protection in the way of high prices, with all the disadvantages of internal continental Free Trade in the way of competition, and the added weight of a tradition of very high wages and of unbusinesslike spending habits. The great crest of the boom gave way eventually to a deep depression, which nothing but the boundless and buoyant faith of Australians in their country and in themselves could have survived.

But the gold rush has left a permanent mark on Perth in another way. In the antediluvian days all the posts were filled by West Australians and by specially imported Englishmen. But now the State was full of eager Victorians and others from the East—locally known as 't'other-siders'—who wanted their place in the sun, and took good care to get it. Federation hastened the process, for the Commonwealth services and departments cared nothing for family ties; gradually new blood, with keener instincts and more forceful business habits, flowed into the vacancies, till the old families had lost the old monopoly and rule of things and systems.

A not unnatural result was that West Australians of two or three generations' standing formed their own society, caring little for the distinctions of wealth and poverty, but caring much for the feeling of the countryside, and inclined to ignore the intruders from the East. Some disgraceful acts of treachery against domestic sacred ties, with which a kindly hospitality was repaid, intensified the feeling. This coldness and exclusiveness have to some extent broken down, but it is still interesting to note the satisfaction with which one family will explain to visitors that it has been West Australian from the first; while another will tell, with an odd mixture of complacency and apology, that it is from Melbourne or Geelong. It is

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A PROOF OF METTLE.

NAPOLEAN BOSWELL, aged twelve—Gypsy; address, North of England or elsewhere; occupation, no more settled than residence—came clattering into the camp in a smother of dust, a drove of turbulent Shetland ponies tossing, scuffling, plunging round about him, and making all the noise of a Valkyrie ride.

A girl sat on the steps of a caravan, clasping a knee with her two hands, and critically surveyed his home-coming. She gave her verdict in strident tones.

‘You can’t ride like Wisdom Lee—not you!’

To tell the truth this was a very mortifying reception for Napoleon. A year ago they had been friendly to the point of the contriving of a secret marriage, but then their ways had parted. He knew that he should find her in this particular camping place, the night before Aldwark Fair, and he had therefore ridden into camp in his very best style. The more excellent Wisdom Lee was a swarthy shockheaded hobbledehoy, and was engaged in wiping down a horse with a wisp of straw. He looked up grinning from below the horse’s belly.

‘You see’d me ride that bay colt yesterday, Gentilla?’ he said.

‘Oh, yes, Wisdom; I see’d you ride that bay colt. That was something like riding, that was.’

Jealousy lit a fire in Napoleon’s breast, and its heat shrivelled up all the powers of repartee in the brain. When he slid down from his pony’s back all he could say was:

‘Huh! Toadface, you speak ’bout one true word in ten. I’ll never trouble myself about your cleverness. It’s just pisoned with lies.’

He turned his back upon them, whistling courageously, and strode away down the lane to where under shelter of a small pine-wood stood his father’s gaily painted and prosperous-looking caravan. Very moodily he set himself to drive his ponies, for their refreshing, into the stream, and pondered over the changefulness of womankind.

It was one of those camping places beloved of Romanichels. It lay not a hundred yards from the broad high road, but in the

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kindly concealment of thick pine-wood. The turf was firm under the heavy caravans. The grass was rich and plentiful beneath the hedgerows. A stream slipped gently along by the side of the track wherein the dusty road-weary beasts could splash knee-deep and draw long draughts. Once upon a time such camping places were common enough. Nowadays they are rare, and moreover it is now the habit of the police to talk by telephone and hunt on bicycles.

From the caravan door hard by, where Poley stood in deep thought among his ponies, there shuffled a very ancient man. He looked like some nearly vanquished pine-tree of the wood beaten down after many years of fighting the wind and rain. Like its bark, his hands and face were almost black and fissured with wrinkles, but the eyes which looked out from under the grizzly locks shone like birds' eyes. The fire of a fierce and turbulent life still smouldered there. The old man stood for a moment in the doorway and gazed out.

'Oh, Mi-Duvel (my God),' he said. 'De same old hatshin' tan (stopping place). De very same.' This ancient son of the Kálo Rat (black blood) had never mastered the elusive 'th' of the Gâjos in all the long years he had gone in and out among them and trafficked with them. He peered eagerly up and down the lane, and then tremulously called :

'Alabyna, Ho ! Alabyna !' and once more, 'Alabyna, my gal, Alabyna !'

Poley looked up with a scared white face.

'Pon my soul, he is a-callin' to my blessed dead grandmother. He is seein' ghosts, I'm certin sure.' Poley was dismayed not without reason, because never once since his grandmother's death, two years ago, had he heard the old man utter the sacred name of the partner of a long rough life ; and moreover, after the merciful and curious custom of the Gypsy folk the ' forenames ' of two near relatives had been so modified that the old man might never be constrained either to speak or to hear the syllables that would sharpen the sting of his desolation.

'Gran'dad,' he said under his breath, 'she's gone away, you know, has old—old——' He stopped, for he could not speak the name.

'What are you saying, foolish boy ?' muttered the old man, turning an anger-lit eye on him. 'Of course, I know Alabyna's gone to de town, gone wid her baskets. She goes every day.'

'No, Gran'dad,' Poley stammered, 'she's gone—to—gone to——'

'What do you know 'bout it, fine Ignorance?' said the old man testily. 'She'll be back now almost d'rectly, and dâdi! if I don't believe dere ain't no sticks for de fire ready.' Old Zachary Boswell climbed painfully down the caravan steps and hobbled off. Poley shook his head perplexedly as he watched the old man slowly disappear into the shade and silence of the wood.

There is no pride of possession like the pride of possession of news, be it bad or good, and as Poley's father with the rest of the drove could not now be very far away from the camp, Poley felt it imperative to hasten forward to meet him on the road and apprise him of the evil that threatened his house. But on the way up the lane he could not refrain from loudly imparting the intelligence at each caravan door he passed that his grandfather was going crazed and had taken to seeing ghosts in the camping place.

At the Lovell caravan Genty was still sitting on the steps. She was alone. 'Say, Genty,' he began, 'my Gran'dad——'

'I don't care anything about your Gran'dad,' she said haughtily. 'I don't, because what I said just now was true—gospel truth—that you can't ride near so well as Wisdom Lee.'

Poley forgot the impending family calamity and flared up.

'You lie, girl,' he said; 'dere isn't a horse in my dad's drove I cannot ride.'

She started up. 'Ride dat one, den!' she said triumphantly, pointing with outstretched finger up the road. Big Napoleon Boswell, father of little Napoleon Boswell, had just come into view, riding with care a tall chestnut horse, big of bone and sinewy, but with roving eye and twitching ear, and marked by every possible sign and token as belonging to the equine criminal class.

Poley saw and flushed crimson. 'Tis a blood 'oss,' he said, 'and a hot 'un, but I'd ride him any day only my father says no one is to touch him but hisself.'

'There! I told you!' Gentilla snapped out viciously between her white teeth.

Poley stood dumfounded before this example of maiden mutability. This was a Gentilla he had never seen before, and who had come from he knew not where.

'Well, if my dad would let me!' he protested, 'I would ride him as easy as ever Wisdom Lee would. *He* ain't no jockey of any sort.'

'You only talk like my mammy's jackdaw,' said Gentilla scornfully. 'You only talk and don't do nothin'. I'd disdain to be always galderin' 'bout what I could do.'

'You're a witch,' he said fiercely, his patience exhausted, 'a real thoroughbred 'un, and I know better than to be wasting my time talking to such as you. It's a 'mendjus unlucky thing to stand talking to a witch. There, if I don't see now as you've actually got cross eyes, gal.'

'You shameless boy,' she called in tremulous anger, 'calling me names like that. Of all the brazen——' But he had already darted away in pursuit of his father.

The disquieting tidings of his sire's behaviour so impressed the elder Napoleon that he sought immediate counsel with his wife.

'Well,' she said, 'I'm certain sure he were all right at breakfast time. He was cussing of me awful about the bacon as didn't suit him, and he threw a plate at me and broke it. He was quite hisself then.'

'If you ask me, I believe it's dis hatshin' tan (camping place) that's to account for it,' said Napoleon perplexedly. 'It used to be a great stopping place for my dad's people in ancient times, I mind well, and true enough we haven't drawed in here since my blessed mother died. I feel sure it's de place what has witchered him.'

'And I don't seem to like the place myself, man,' said Trinali his wife, shivering as she looked out among the darkling pine-trees. 'It's a ghostly alarmin' sort of place as ever I see. Sho! We'll go straight away off after Aldwark Fair.'

They all shook their black heads in disparagement of the locality, and then the old man was brought gently back with a bundle of sticks in his arms. But he smoked his little black pipe very peacefully over the fire that night and spoke no more about Alabyna.

As Poley lay under the brown tent half asleep, half awake, blinking at the stars through a rent in the blanket, one never-to-be-forgotten scene of which he had once been a spectator passed and re-passed before his eyes with a sickening frequency. It was the dark night after old Alabyna's funeral, and in a silent semicircle about his grandfather's caravan stood a crowd of his people gazing. And out of the semicircle Zachary Boswell groped his way with tottering step but never a word on his lips, and he took a living brand from the fire and, climbing into the caravan, slowly and solemnly applied the smouldering flame first to the bedclothes, then to the curtains, and then here and then there, till hungry fire sprang up all about him, illuminating the whole interior. Then the old man staggered down the steps, his arms outstretched

and howling as in the grip of pain, and on every side the Gypsies began to weep and lament with him with a mournful moaning sound like the wind in the trees. Then the awestruck Poley beheld the flames climbing silently all over the caravan, and bursting out from the roof, until at last the wild crackling of the shrivelling timber ended in a crash and the home of the old man sank in a shapeless roaring heap upon the ground. Then old Zachary sat him down upon the low wall, his head in his hands, sobbing as if his heart would break. The elder Napoleon went ap to him.

'Oh, my dear dad, don't go on like that! You'll drive me mad!' he said, weaving his arms protectingly round him.

To him his father, in mournful tones, 'I can't help it, 'Polean. I can't help it; I've lost my dear, dear wife, and I've lost my beautiful living wagon, and I've lost everything, and as for me—I'm alone, like a lost sheep on de mountains.'

Poley did not know it, but just so had his far-away forefathers done for their dead, centuries ago, among the hills of Asia, that the dear ones should have no need to go forth upon the great unknown journey without shelter and without possessions. And the custom lives among good Romanichels unto this day.

But when Poley woke next morning he had forgotten the visions of the night. The sun was shining; the birds were singing exultantly in the woods, and it was Aldwark Horse Fair. But his joy was short-lived.

'Ho, Poley!' his father called out to him from the midst of his horses. 'You've got to stop to mind the place to-day.'

Poley stretched his length on the ground with his face hidden in his sleeves and howled dismally. Aldwark Horse Fair was one of the greatest among fairs visited by the Boswells and a thing of delirious joy to Gypsy youth.

'No good doing that, you young vermin,' said his father unsympathetically. 'The place has got to be minded, and I'm leaving that chestnut devil in the field there. You watch as he doesn't break the fences, but don't go near him for aught else. Hear me?'

His mother sorrowing stooped over his bowed black head. 'Don't carry on like that, little Poley. Just you stay and look after the old man werry careful, that's my dear boy. See he don't wander off anywhere, and keep the fire going, and I'll fetch you the beautifullest whip from the Fair you ever did see.'

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Then three or four of the caravans moved off out of the lane, the droves of straw-bedecked horses clattered forward, the mounted men and boys shouting and cracking their whips around them. Men and women clambered up into dogcarts, laughing and chattering, and away they all went in dust and clamour and hilarity.

Three caravans alone remained—the home of the Boswells, the home of the Lovells, and the home of Mr. Plato Smith, and a silence dreary and horrible to Poley settled down upon the camping place. Presently he looked up over his dusty sleeve, and took a survey of the scene as he lay on the ground. Plato Smith sat in a stupid heap against a tree trunk. He was a battered-looking ‘posh an’ posh’ (half-breed) and was no company at all. He had been drunk the night before, and was just sensible enough now to be left in charge of the camp with Poley as second in command. Old Zachary Boswell was nodding peacefully propped up in a corner of the Boswell caravan. Looking up the lane towards the Lovell caravan Poley spied Gentilla, irreproachably tidy and with sleeves tucked up, washing the breakfast things. She caught his upward glance and haughtily turned her back on him, stooping over her work with ostentatious application. Was ever outlook of a day more empty and hopeless? Poley fell to crying again, and cried himself to sleep.

When he woke up, Plato Smith was standing over him fumbling in his pockets with some coppers. His eyes were thirsty for drink.

‘I’m just going a little way, Poley my boy, only a little way a-walkin’ out on the road,’ he said. ‘Do you mind the place like a good boy while I’m away, and don’t you go moving off after birds’ nests or any such foolishness, mind you—I’m only going a very little way—just on the road.’

Poley nodded comprehendingly. Plato was no loss. At the Lovells’ caravan he saw that Genty was now listlessly sitting on the step swinging her feet, and it was borne in upon him that she looked sad and forlorn. He drank the tea that had been left for him, now as cold and dull as his world had become to him, munched some bread and treacle and went to sleep again, dreaming that he was riding through the Fair ground on a thirty-guinea horse.

‘Hey, dâdi! What’s that?’ He awoke with a start, and sat bolt upright, scared into wide wakefulness. For old Zachary had bestirred himself and was on the move, roving up and down before the camp fire with feeble but agitated steps. He was talking to himself in short rapid sentences, and his thin and knotty fingers

were clutching at the air as he walked. It would seem as if some stormy scene of olden days had gripped the old man's wandering wits, and the present had altogether gone from his ken.

'Alabyna, hold tight! hold tight on to me, my good girl, for your dear life. See dere's three of the devils after us, only three. Catching us up, do you say? No! By G—, they ain't. We've chored (stolen) a better horse nor any of them is riding, my dear. Hold up, mare, Mi-duveleste, hold up, will you, and we'll beat 'em yet. Hup, hup! steady now.'

Then after a pause, triumphantly: 'There now! What do you think of that, my girl? Distancing 'em fast. Can't hardly hear the ratvalo hoofs now.'

He stood still listening intently. Poley crouched on the ground, fearful under the old man's gaze, but the eyes that glittered and shone like deep fires saw nothing but the phantasms of a long departed day. Poley screwed up courage to crawl away. Then he picked himself up and made off to the Lovells' caravan as fast as he could run.

'Genty, Genty!' he cried; 'oh, I want you!'

'What is it, Poley?' came a chastened voice from the caravan.

'It's my old Gran'dad, girl. He's gone ever so crazed. He's seeing all manner of ghosts, and dead people. Dâdi! Genty, but it's terrible to hearken to him.'

'Don't go near him, Poley,' cried Gentilla fearfully. 'They're not safe when they're like that. I've heard my mammy say so.'

'But I've got to go near him, Genty. I've got to watch him ever so careful. He may do harm to his poor dear unfortnit self. He don't know whatever he's doing—I see he don't.'

'Oh, Poley, don't!' she began, persuasively; but when he shook her restraining hand impatiently from his arm, 'Well, I'll come too,' she said courageously, 'if you want me.'

He held out his hand to her, and together they crept down the lane again to the Boswell caravan. Apparently the old man was still pushing forward his stolen phantom horse with Alabyna's arms clinging round him. 'Mind the trees, my girl,' he was saying, warding off imaginary branches with his hand. 'Keep your head low, for we must ride through this wood or we'll never shake 'em off. No, don't kiss me, Alabyna, there ain't time for such foolishness. You just mind the branches, and hold on to me. Oh, God! Alabyna, look, there's men in front of us too. See 'em in the field there! The whole country's up and after us. The wood is alive

with them, a man behind every tree. We can't do it, not against hundreds of 'em.' Then with a shrill outcry—'Oh, Mi-Duvel, she is struck. Say you ain't hurt, Alabyna?—not very badly hurt?' The old man sat down on the ground and began to sob dolefully to himself, repeating the words over and over again, 'not badly hurt, Alabyna?—not badly hurt?'

'Oh! Poley, ain't he dreadful to hear?' said Gentilla, gripping the boy's fingers convulsively. 'What can we do for him?'

'I don't see as we can do anything except keep still as still, and watch him,' answered Poley gloomily.

Presently the old man began to speak again, but in more peaceful tones. He had passed into other scenes. 'We'll hatsh our tan (pitch our tent) here to-night, Alabyna. It's a beautiful stoppin' place, beautiful as my God's own place. The trees is so finely sheltering, and dere's good water and grass. You can lie down and rest. You want to rest, my gal, for your time's not so far off; and if you'll sleep I'll make de fire. She's sleeping now, my Alabyna, in a beautiful campin' place. Sleepin' . . . Sleepin' . . . Sleepin' . . . No, she's *dead*!' The old man suddenly struggled on to his feet screaming aloud—'Dead!' and the children shrank back in fear.

'Yes, *dead, dead*, I say,' he cried, 'and here am I with dis gorgeous caravan an' beautiful things in it as was hers, my Alabyna's, and black shame to me, I've never burnt it, never burnt it up.'

Swiftly before the children had grasped his intention, he had caught up a smouldering brand out of the fire and staggered in the direction of the Boswell caravan.

'Oh, Poley,' cried Genty, in tears, 'he's going to burn your father's living wagon. He's mad crazed.'

'Dat ain't *your* living wagon, Gran'dad.' Poley raised his voice in shrill protest. 'It's my Dad's. It's your son's, Napoleon Boswell's. Mi-Duvel, don't touch it.'

Poley was alert now, and fear had forsaken him. As long as the old man was seeing ghosts there had been no strength left in Poley, but when it came to stern actualities and the burning of property, the boy's nerves grew steady, and his mind clear. He fell straightway upon the old man, and after a brief struggle wrenched the flaming wood from his hand, and hurled it sputtering into the stream.

'Devil's breed!' screamed Zachary, in a blaze of anger, 'who are you? What is your business with me? Why dare you come in my way? Stand backward out of my road, or I'll kill you.'

He tottered unsteadily once more towards the fire, but Poley was there before him, scattering the smouldering sticks and embers far and wide, and stamping upon the glowing ashes wherever he could see them.

'Oh, man, man,' sobbed Zachary piteously, 'why do you do dat? I'm *bound* to burn the living wagon—for Alabyna's sake. Why in de name of God do you put de fire out?' Then he sank down miserably among the ashes.

'Genty,' said Poley, rounding suddenly upon her, 'dare you watch him for me—all alone?'

'Oh, Poley, what do you mean?' she asked in open-eyed amazement.

'I must go away, Genty—I must go fetch my father,' he explained. 'Old Zachary can't do any harm to de wagon now, for dere's no fire left; and don't you see, girl, dat I must go like de wind, before he can make more mischief for us.'

'But your father's three miles off and more. You'll be years and years gettin' to him.'

'I would ride like seven devils, girl, I would.'

'Ride? What'll you ride? All de horses is gone.'

'No, Genty, dere's one. Dere's the chestnut delomengero (kicking horse) in de field, him dat you told me to ride last night. My Dad don't want to sell dat horse yet.'

'Oh, Poley, Poley, you mustn't ride dat, never, never! You'll be throwed off and killed, indeed you will.'

'Ho, no, not I,' he said contemptuously. 'I'll ride him all right, never you fear, if I can only just get de bridle on to him. Let me once be on de back of him and I ain't afraid of nothing.'

'Oh, gracious, but you're fine,' she said, clasping her hands, and looking at him with eyes wondrous wide and bright and admiring. 'Fine and brave, and I—I am afraid just to stop here alone with him, but I *will* try not to be afraid, and I *will* mind him for you. You see if I don't.'

'Never you fear,' he said, not a little vaingloriously, for it was Poley's hour and his horn was exalted. 'Never fear, neither for you nor for me. Why, I'll be back from Aldwark, along with my Daddy, before you hardly know I've ridden off.' He gave a hurried glance round to reassure himself, and noted that the old man had crawled to the caravan steps and lay there now very quietly. He was still muttering in incoherent anger, but with all the natural

and supernatural force sunk down in him. Then Poley took to his heels heading for the road, and quickly vanished from Gentilla's view among the pine-trees. Genty heaved a great sigh, and sank, sick with fear, on the soft cushion of pine-needles. From his resting place, not ten yards away, the old man blinked and mumbled at her in his craziness. That was fearful enough, but what terrified her more still was the thought of little Napoleon, up there in the field the other side the road, matching himself against the dreadful chestnut delomengero. She strained her ears to catch any echoes of the conflict, but not a sound came down to her. All was still save the maddening singing of the birds in the wood. Why should they sing like that with all this trouble so close about them, and maybe death? Genty kept pressing her fingers to her ears. If only she could hear more than that singing of birds and chatter of a crazed old man! Ah! there is something at last—the clang of a horse's hoofs, sharp and decisive, but they are battering on the hard road savagely, unevenly like hammer blows, and Gentilla knew what that meant.

'They're fightin' on the road there—Poley and that dreadful spiteful horse. My dear Lord, but he'll be killed, that poor little Poley!' The battle raged till she could endure it no longer; then she jumped up, and fled as fast as her feet could carry her for the road; but just as she reached the corner the concussion of fierce, continuous stamping emerged in the noise of a sudden onrush, and she was just in time to see the great horse thundering by in a turmoil of dust with neck outstretched and straightened tail. On his back a diminutive rider clung desperately with supple thighs. With shoulders held square and face set keen to the road he appeared and disappeared once or twice among the trees, and then quickly the clash of the hoofs passed by and died away into silence.

'Dear Lord, send him well,' she prayed in awestruck tones; 'Dear Lord send him well.'

It was almost the only prayer she knew, and she generally used it when she had the toothache. Then she crept back to her post near the Boswell caravan with the sense of an awful responsibility lying heavily upon her. She had begun to conceive of her watch almost as a sacred trust.

Once old Zachary looked up sharply at her—'Is dat Alabyna a-settin' dere?' he asked.

'No, it's only me—Genty, little Genty Lovell, don't you know,' she explained in a low voice.

'Oh, well, go and tell her den—she ain't far off—in yonder wagon maybe—; tell her as I cannot seem to find a good hatshin' tan (camping place) along dis 'ere road. It's a Kâlo bengesko drom (dark devil's road) just here; but tell her never to mind, we'll be out of it soon, and I'll very quick find her as beautiful a hatshin' tan as any dear person could wish for. Go 'long, girl.' Then he stretched his old limbs out contentedly along the grass as if he had begun to travel the road more peacefully 'in the hushed mind's mysterious far away,' and Genty settled down to a vigilant and silent observation.

The larger horse fairs are to the Gypsies not only great days of trading, but of assembly. There meet friends and foes who have not encountered each other it may be for months or even years, and it follows, therefore, that the Fairs are not unusually the occasions for headlong excursions from the plain paths of sobriety and peace. They are love-feasts and they are battlefields. The riotous business of Aldwark Fair being over, the Gypsies drew together in crowds in the spirit of love or of hate, and the great inn-yard was heaving with a shouting, swearing, arguing, jesting crowd. A big coach-house had been cleared, and a wooden table ran the length of it, fringed with mugs and glasses. From table to wall the place was packed with Gypsies, men and women, youths and maidens. On top of the table the elder Napoleon Boswell was noisily executing a horn-pipe among the mugs to the music of fiddle and tambourine, and occasionally breaking into song:

'Dik at the Gâjos,
The Gâjos round mandi,
Tryin' to lel mi meripen,
Mi meripen away.'

Half the assembly were derisively applauding him, half were clamorously attending to their own business. Suddenly a man fought his way fiercely through the crowd.

'Come down off that table, Boswell,' he cried, 'if you don't want to see your young son a dead corpse. He's on the back of a mad chestnut horse, and he can't hold him. He's smashing his way through the Fair like a ratvalo steam-engine.'

Napoleon turned ashen pale, sobered in a moment. He leapt off the table, sending the mugs flying right and left, and the crowd made way for him as he headed for the road. He arrived at the yard gateway in time to see Poley breathless, hatless, with white set face, struggling with all the strength that was left

in him to get the mastery of his turbulent mount. They came careering headlong down the street, scattering the populace.

The elder Napoleon leapt on to the gate. 'Poley,' he shouted with voice of brass, 'pull him round in here if you can. Pull ! Pull ! Pull like—— !'

Poley caught the words, glanced up and saw the waving arms ; then with one supreme effort of will and muscle he pulled. The chestnut swerved, charged into the gate, and as he slipped forward upon the cobbles his head was seized by half a dozen breathless bystanders, and Poley rolled off into his father's arms.

'Mi-Duvel Poley, what ha' you done this for ?' thundered the elder Napoleon, shaking him on to his feet. 'What devil's game is this you've been up to, boy ?'

'Oh, my Daddy, I could not help it,' he gasped, 'it's along of my Gran'dad. Old Zachary has gone senseless mad, and he was a-tryin' to set all afire our living wagon, and—oh, but you must come quick.'

'Truth ?' questioned Napoleon briefly, with set teeth.

'My Holy God's truth !' answered Poley solemnly.

'Drink that, boy,' cried tall Gilderoy Lovell, uncle to Poley, pushing his way through the crowd and thrusting a glass of beer up against Poley's lips. While Poley spluttered over the liquor, Gilderoy vociferated like a trumpet from the gate top—'Lay anyone here *panj bar* (five pounds), *panj bar*, I say, he don't ride that there horse round the Fair once and bring him back into this yard like young Boswell. *Panj bar* to anybody !'

'Stop that foolishness, Gilderoy. He's my 'orse, not yours,' growled Napoleon ; and then to his wife—'Quick, Trinali, get your bits of things together, and up into the dog-cart. Quick, for your blessed life. There ain't no time to lose.'

Ten minutes later Napoleon, standing up in his dog-cart and lashing his horse unsparingly, had left the Fair well behind, and was flying along between the hedgerows. Poley and his mother held on tight to their seats. Once his mother leaned over and whispered to Poley—'Oh, my Poley, I'm glad, I'm glad. I'd rather a hundred times the living wagon were all burnt down than that evil had come to you along o' that wicked horse.' Poley rubbed his head against her shoulder responsively.

Meanwhile Gentilla kept watch over the old man with wide-open eyes. Once or twice he raised himself on his elbow and looked eagerly round him, and Genty quivered with alarm, but

each time he sank down again wearily and settled himself more comfortably against the caravan steps. At last she caught the sound of deep even breathing, and she heaved a sigh of relief. 'Bless de poor old man,' she said; 'indeed, he do well to get a bit of sleep, and it's the luckiest thing in the world for me.'

But still there came no sound from the road, no Plato Smith returning from his cups, nor Napoleon Boswell from the Fair, and her mind began to be haunted by visions of the peril that must have beset Poley between the camp and Aldwark town. She wished she really were the witch Poley had called her. Then she would pour the leastest drop of magic in that chestnut horse's ear and turn him as tame as any cat; or, better still, she would charm Poley into a prince in shining armour and so insured against any damage; but oh, joy, at last there are sounds upon the road above, sounds of flying wheels and wild upbraidings of a horse in Romani.

Two minutes later and her watch was relieved. She sprang to her feet with a cry of welcome, and Napoleon Boswell came tumbling down out of the dog-cart, throwing the reins to Poley.

'Where is my poor, poor old Dad?' he demanded.

'He's there,' said Genty, pointing to the recumbent form by the caravan. Napoleon ran to his father's side, and taking him by the shoulders, gently shook him. 'Dad, my dear Dad,' he cried, 'whatever in de worl is de matter with you? Wake up, my man.' But there was no response save the response of a heavy burden. Napoleon took the wrinkled face very tenderly between his hands. It was a softly smiling face, but quite still.

'My dear Jesus! but I do believe de old old man is quite dead,' he called to his wife in broken tones. 'Come here, my Trinali, and tell me what you think. He is cold as water.' And so, indeed, it was, for old Zachary Boswell had, after long wandering, come to his last *hatshin' tan*, and from the look on his face it would seem that he had found it 'a very beautiful one, beautiful as my God's own place.'

Late in the evening of the day after his grandfather's funeral, Poley was returning to the camp from a vigilant and not altogether innocent stroll along the hedgerows with the dogs, and whom should he come upon but Genty sitting on a gate not a stone's throw from the caravans diligently darning a stocking.

'Hello, Genty,' he said cheerily, coming to a stand in front of her.

'Hello, Poley,' she responded, a little falteringly.

'Well, girl, do you think *now* as I can ride a bit?' he demanded. His soul was swelling with a sense of vindication and of victory.

'I should just think so, Poley,' she said without looking up.

'Could Wisdom Lee have ever done what I did?'

'To tell the truth, *never* in all the world.'

'And am I always talking, like your jackdaw, and never doin' anythin', eh?'

'Deed no, Poley,' in a very faint voice, and Poley became wonderingly conscious that she was on the verge of tears.

'Certain sure of dat?' he asked sternly.

'Certain sure, Poley.'

Then she scrambled down hastily from the gate and stood before him, thrusting her knitting in her apron.

'And, oh Poley,' she went on breathlessly, 'now I do know well that you are the cleverest and bravest boy of all the boys that ever I have seen. There's none of them could do what you did.'

Then to his astonishment she suddenly put her arms about him and kissed him once heartily on the forehead, but before he could recover from the shock she was away in full flight to the camp. He saw her flit away into the dusk, without one backward look, and disappear into the darkness of the Lovell caravan.

Poley presently betook himself to his bed of soft sweet straw under the brown tent in a condition of pleased bewilderment.

'There now,' he said to himself as he worked himself comfortably into the straw, 'I can understan' my Dad's horses—at least most of 'em, and I can understan' dogs, and I can understan' heaps of dear little creatures, but I cannot understan' people what says one thing one day and another thing the next. I don't understan', and I can't abide them. I cannot abide Genty Lovell. Leastways, I'll just wait and see what she says to-morrow and then I'll say.'

R. O. M.

*OLD HAWORTH FOLK WHO KNEW THE
BRONTËS.*

THE following personal recollections of the Brontës have been obtained from old Yorkshire folk who knew them when they lived at Haworth. Where my memory has retained them, I have given these reminiscences in the exact words in which at various times—and some of them many times—they have been told to me. In this way, as revealing something of the speech and character of the Haworth villagers at the time the Brontës lived there, as well as showing how the Brontës were regarded by their humbler neighbours, these few recollections, though slight in themselves, may not be without interest.

That they are few goes without saying. Those living to-day who were personally acquainted with the Brontës are necessarily small in number and old in years. It requires a retentive memory to 'mind' things—as we say in that part of the country where the Brontës lived—which took place more than fifty years ago. This is particularly the case if at the time no one thought that these things would ever be worth the 'minding.'

'I might have done better if I'd thought there was going to be so much talk about them,' said Mrs. Ratcliffe to me upon one occasion when I asked her if she could give me any personal recollections of the Brontës. This Mrs. Ratcliffe, who was before her marriage Tabitha Brown, is the last surviving sister of the Brontës' servant Martha Brown. We were sitting in her house in Haworth, the house in which the Brontës' old servant Tabitha died.

'She wouldn't ha' comed here to die but with Charlotte being so poorly and no one but my sister to do the work,' Mrs. Ratcliffe explained. Readers of Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' may recall that it was during Charlotte's last illness, that 'time of distress and anxiety respecting the last daughter of the house she had served so long,' that Tabitha died. 'Our poor old Tabby is dead and buried,' Charlotte wrote in a letter to Ellen Nussy—one of those two short letters written 'in faint, faint pencil marks' on her deathbed.

Mrs. Ratcliffe used often to spend the evening with her sister

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at the parsonage, and in this way, as well as in the Sunday school, where she was taught by both Charlotte and Anne Brontë, was brought into contact with the Brontë sisters. She remembers Mr. Nicholls when he first came to Haworth and lodged in her mother's house. It was there that he read 'Shirley,' laughing so much over it and stamping his feet in his amusement that, as Mrs. Ratcliffe says, 'my mother thought he was wrong in his head.' It was Mrs. Ratcliffe's father who, having learnt at Halifax that Charlotte had written 'Jane Eyre,' told this to his daughter Martha. Now Martha's suspicions had long been on the *qui vive*. She knew that the sisters were writing, and she used to think, as Mrs. Ratcliffe says, that they were writing books, but yet she could never 'get them to say ought,' never 'get hold of ought,' to substantiate her suspicions. But, primed with her father's information, she forthwith accused Charlotte of the authorship. Nor did she allow herself to be put off when Charlotte retorted, 'Oh, Martha, how you talk!'

'Now,' she says, 'it's my father has been to Halifax and he's got to know.'

In a letter from which Mrs. Gaskell gives extracts Charlotte herself referred to these incidents shortly after their occurrence :

Mr. — has finished 'Shirley'; he is delighted with it. John —'s wife seriously thought him going wrong in the head, as she heard him giving vent to roars of laughter as he sat alone, clapping and stamping on the floor. He would read all the scenes about the curates aloud to papa. . . . Martha came in yesterday, puffing and blowing, and much excited. 'I've heard sich news!' she began. 'What about?' 'Please, ma'am, you've been and written two books—the grandest books that ever was seen. My father has heard it at Halifax, and Mr. G—— T—— and Mr. G—— and Mr. M—— at Bradford; and they're going to have a meeting at the Mechanics Institute, and to settle about ordering them.' 'Hold your tongue, Martha, and be off.'

Martha took a keen interest in Charlotte's literary work. On one occasion she paid a visit to London to visit a cousin who lived there, and before going she told Charlotte that she intended to call upon her publishers, and in spite of Charlotte's expostulations she went. 'She said she couldn't sleep at all the night afore thinking about it, but she'd made up her mind to go,' and she went. Charlotte only laughed when she came back and told her. 'They didn't reckon her a right servant—they thought something on her. It isn't the same to-day not as it used to be.'

Mrs. Ratcliffe remembers all the members of the family. 'I used to think Miss Anne looked the nicest and most serious like,'

she says ; and of Emily she relates in illustration of her statement that she was ' that wilful like she would wait on herself,' that ' on the day she died she was combing her hair and the comb fell into the fire and burnt some teeth out.' Of that day Mrs. Gaskell wrote :

One Tuesday morning, in December, she arose and dressed herself as usual, making many a pause, but doing everything for herself, and even endeavouring to take up her employment of sewing : the servants looked on, and knew what the catching, rattling breath, and the glazing of the eye too surely foretold ; but she kept at her work ; and Charlotte and Anne, though full of unspeakable dread, had still the faintest spark of hope. . . . The morning drew on to noon. Emily was worse : she could only whisper in gasps. Now, when it was too late, she said to Charlotte, ' If you will send for a doctor, I will see him now.' About two o'clock she died.

Mrs. Ratcliffe remembers Branwell, having, as she says, ' often been by when he's been in our house talking with my father.' But the picture of him that remains most distinct in her mind is that of his going into the parsonage two or three days before he died : ' There was a low step to mount and I can always remember seeing him catch hold to the door side—it seemed such hard work for him. I believe that was the last time he was ever out.' If so, the day was Friday, September 22, 1848. Branwell died on Sunday morning, September 24. In a letter of October 9 (Mrs. Gaskell's ' Life of Charlotte Brontë') Charlotte writes : ' He was entirely confined to his bed but for one single day, and was in the village two days before his death.' Concerning Mr. Brontë she pronounces : ' He wasn't as ill as they say.' And once when I asked if Charlotte was happy in her marriage, she answered, ' I always think she was, and I'm sure he was.'

She still preserves a few mementoes of the various members of the family : of Miss Branwell a silk shawl, of Mr. Brontë a small hammer he used to use, and of Charlotte a delaine skirt and a white sprigged net veil—which latter has served as a christening veil for several of her grandchildren. Perhaps, however, her most interesting relic is a photograph on glass of the three sisters. ' I believe Charlotte was the lowest and the broadest, and Emily was the tallest. She'd bigger bones and was stronger looking and more masculine, but very nice in her ways,' she comments. ' But I used to think Miss Anne looked the nicest and most serious like ; she used to teach at Sunday school. I've been taught by her and by Charlotte and all.' And it is on Anne that her glance rests as she says, ' I think that is a good face.' There is no doubt which

of the sisters of Haworth Parsonage was Mrs. Ratcliffe's favourite.

Mr. Nicholls is still remembered by a few old Haworth folk, although he never revisited the place after resigning the curacy upon Mr. Brontë's death. An old lady I know was a pupil in the church school at Stanbury, which is some two miles away from Haworth across the moor, and she remembers Mr. Nicholls coming to the school twice a week accompanied by his brown retriever and always bringing sweets for the children. But most eloquent concerning Mr. Nicholls and his retriever is an old village sportsman who was the chosen companion of the curate on his sporting expeditions for tickling trout, and for training the retriever to set game on the Haworth moors.

'Ay, I've been with Mr. Nicholls mony a time on t' moor and catching trout,' the old man has told me; 'he was fearful fond of going to Smith Bank' (where are the trout stream and the waterfall frequented by the Brontë sisters), 'and we gate mony a lot. We'd no rods or lines,' he tells you, 'but just put our hands under them as they lay under the stones in the pools and laiked (played) with them, and when we gate hod on them we threw them as far as we could into t' field. . . . Poaching do you say? Nay, there wor no preserving, not there there worn't, at that time: we could wade up and down that stream as we liked. And after he wor married Charlotty—Mrs. Nicholls—used to come and all. She'd take a board and put it across two stones and car down on t' green while Mr. Nicholls and me were wading up and down t' stream.' And if you ask him what sort of a hand Mr. Nicholls made at this method of trout capture he will tell you, 'He wor a varra good hand at it, a better hand nor me.'

And from fishing he will pass on to expeditions on the moor with the retriever. 'Ay, we'd often go on t' moor together, Mr. Nicholls and me. He'd a retriever, a girt brown un, he'd go into t'water anywhere. It just suited him to see t'dog run after t'birds, t'moor game, and it would creep within a yard of them and it had had no training nobbut what he'd given it. It worn't like dogs that have been trained and beaten.' Did he beat it? 'Nay, it wor a reight petted dog, a house dog, but it wor a reight clever dog—it would go sideways through stile-hoils when it wor carrying a stick.' And from the dog his thoughts go back to the dog's owner. 'A very quiet man wor Mr. Nicholls,' he tells you; 'never much talk; a dark-complexioned man, hair black as a coil

—he'd go white afore he died. He wor about ten years older nor me, and I'm seventy-five.'

The old man was a plasterer in his working days, and was employed on the church schools built in Haworth during Mr. Nicholls' curacy. This is a favourite topic of his. He is a stout champion of Mr. Nicholls, and is fond of declaring that he built the schools and ought to have succeeded Mr. Brontë in the living. 'Ay, he built yon schools all except'—he particularises some portion of them—'did Mr. Nicholls out of his own brass; before that t' school wor in t' inside o' t' church. And he ought to ha' had Haworth Church. I never thought but he would ha' had it and he did himself. All t' church folk wanted him to have it, and he would ha' had it but for one o' t' trustees.' This trustee, he explains, was 'a girt manufacturer and a Methody, and he'd t'casting vote—it came to an odd 'un.' So Mr. Nicholls left Haworth, and the old man, who was young then, never saw him again. 'They wanted him to come back here and preach once for t' rish-bearing Sunday, but he wouldn't. He thought he'd gotten done out o' t' church, and he'd never face Haworth again,' he says. At Haworth and some other places in the West Riding the festival of the church's dedication is still termed the rish—or rush—bearing, from the circumstance that formerly the parishioners brought rushes to spread on the floor of the church.

'I've worked for old Patrick,' the old man has said to me sometimes, meaning no disrespect by the familiar appellation, 'and I knew Branwell and all when I wor a lad—a little gingered chap, varry sharp. He wor mates wi' a man 'at lived i' this house, Brown they called him, a girt stout man.' 'A good man wor Patrick, he'd ha' gi'en you owt nearly,' he said to me upon one occasion. 'I whitewashed ower t' top on him when he laid a corpse.'

This old sporting companion of Mr. Nicholls belongs to a by-gone age of the Yorkshire working man. 'I'm a right believer in Christ,' he told me upon one occasion. The words may sound self-righteous, but as the old man spoke them they carried conviction. He has a few highly valued treasures: an ancient pair of spectacles which belonged to his grandfather; an old Bible which belonged to his grandmother; a miniature hatchet which he will tell you Mr. Nicholls has had in his hand many a time. He is especially proud of this old hatchet and has great faith in its extreme antiquity, pointing out its worm-eaten h'aft and that

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the head is welded, 'not made t' same as a blacksmith makes them now. If you look at the window in the church you'll see Christ and His disciples have each one in their hands just t' same as this.' These three treasures—the Bible, the spectacles, and the hatchet—he places on his table on Christmas Eve, opening the Bible—just somewhere, for he cannot read; then he lights three candles and, to give his own words, 'I pray an' all, t' bit 'at I can. I allus gi'e Him a good leet t' day when He wor born.' Already in case he live so long he has three candles stored up for next Christmas Eve, for even the providing of three candles has to be taken thought for when your sole income is four shillings a week paid by the parish, of which one shilling goes for rent, leaving fivepence a day for all expenses. It is a grievance with the old man that, having had to accept parish pay, owing to a stroke which incapacitated him from following his trade, he is ineligible for an old-age pension—a shilling a week means so much when your sole income is four shillings. But he does not let this grievance trouble him; his is a nature which looks on the bright side of things. Old and incapacitated from work, poverty-stricken, living alone, without anyone 'belonging to him,' as we say in Yorkshire, there is yet a cheerful look in his blue eye. As he said to me upon one occasion: 'When I haven't a bite i' t' house I put trust i' Providence. I'm as hard as iron and as content as a king, and if I've owt to go on wi' I'm as happy as air.' I can well understand how Mr. Nicholls liked to have his companionship on those sporting expeditions some sixty years ago.

Fond of talking of the Brontës is an old lady of eighty-seven who lived in Haworth the first half of her life, and, after the manner of the old, it is to Haworth, the place of her youth as it was in the days of her youth when the Brontës lived there, that her thoughts turn now, where her memory lingers.

'Eh, dear, when I think about them I can see them as plain to my mind's eye as if they were here. They wore light-coloured dresses all print, and they were all dressed alike until they gate into young women. I don't know that I ever saw them in owt but print—I've heard it said they were pinched—but it was nice print: plain with long sleeves and high neck and tippets down to the waist. The tippets were marrow to their dresses and they'd light-coloured hats on. They looked grand.'

If my memory serves me correctly, I believe the Miss Brontës' dresses have been criticised by others as being somewhat quaint

and prim and old-fashioned and indeed anything but 'grand,' but then these critics had not lived in Haworth all their lives and brought up a family on twelve shillings a week hardly earned in a mill, as had my old lady. On the other hand, the 'nice print' was probably delaine—a softer and more costly material than print, though somewhat similar in appearance. Delaine is the material of Charlotte's skirt which Mrs. Ratcliffe possesses. And on the subject of dress the old lady says, 'I'd an aunt who wor cousin to Tabitha and she and Tabitha gate a dress alike, it wor one-and-six a yard. My mother had a dress 'at wor t' marrow to it; she wor married in it. I've got a bit in a quilt now.'

It was principally in church, as they came in or sat together in the parsonage pew, that the old lady used to observe the Brontë sisters. 'I've seen them come in many a time,' she is fond of recounting. 'They used to come in all together, and there wor no mooild (bustle) about them: they came in so quietly if you hadn't seen them you wouldn't have known they were in at all. They used to come in at t' back door o' t' church, and they sat in the bothamost pew in the church.' The pew was one of those in the chancel. These pews belonged to the farmers, and, according to my informant, were 'varry near always empty.'

The old lady was a Baptist, but, as she explains, 'I went to t' church for a change. I and another girl we allus went together; it wor a change for us. You know girls at that day weren't at liberty as they are now. They had to go to t' miln at six and stay till seven. If they gate to see owt it wor fair a novelty.'

She recalls that when Mr. Brontë went into the pulpit he would always take out his watch, worn with a seal attached to a riband of watered silk, and hang it on to the gas bracket. But her earliest recollections of him go back to some years before she heard him preach—to eighty years ago, to when as a young child she used to seek shelter in the church during the interlude between the morning and afternoon classes of the Baptist Sunday school which she attended. 'You see we lived a mile and a half away across the moor, so I didn't go home for my dinner,' she explains. 'My mother used to tell me to go into t' church if it rained. She said, "No one will mell on you if you go in right pratty" (quietly).' Now this interlude at the Baptist school synchronised with the administration of baptism in Haworth church; so it came about, as the old woman relates, that as a child she has watched Mr. Brontë baptizing 'many and many a score.' And now after

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eighty years she can still see the scene of these baptisms in her mind's eye as distinctly as though they had occurred but yesterday. And concerning the estimation in which Mr. Brontë was held even by dissenters, she says: 'My father used to say there'll never come another man who'll be as peaceable as Mr. Brontë.'

That indeed is the general Haworth verdict upon old Mr. Brontë by those of his parishioners who still remember him. 'I knew him but I wor nobbut young. My father was a hand-loom weaver and Mr. Brontë used to come in and sit with him and talk politics: he was a Conservative and my father was a Liberal and a Baptist, but they never differed,' said a Haworth woman who still lives in the same house where these political talks took place. She possesses a portrait of her father painted by Branwell bearing the date on the back of the canvas, Dec. 22nd, 1838. This portrait is said to be an excellent likeness, and is less crude and amateurish than some of Branwell's attempts at portraiture.

Another Haworth woman who remembered the Brontë sisters died in December of last year. This was Miss Wood, whose father was churchwarden during Mr. Brontë's incumbency, while her mother was a teacher in the Sunday school. 'The Miss Brontës used often to come to our house when I was a child,' Miss Wood has told me. 'They'd bring sketches and such like to amuse us children, but they've all got torn up. As children we've torn their drawings up many a time. Then we'd other things of theirs, but we've given them all away pretty near. People used to come—Americans and others—and none of them would go away, not without something.' Among the Brontë mementoes she retained were a few books—'The Maid of Killarney; or, Albion and Flora,' published by Mr. Brontë in 1818; and some of the novels of the sisters, bearing the inscription on the title-page in handwriting firm and clear for a man of eighty-two, as Mr. Brontë then was: 'P. Brontë, A.B., Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire, May 5th, 1859.' 'I remember my father took them up to the parsonage and got Mr. Brontë to write his name in them,' she explained. But once when I asked her for any personal reminiscences of the Brontë sisters she could give me none. In her own words, she 'just remembered them but nought no more.' And with the exception of Mrs. Ratcliffe there is no one living in Haworth to-day—I think but one person in the world—who was brought into any personal relationship with them; no one who does more than 'just remember' them.

The last time I saw Mrs. Ratcliffe—in January of this year—she recalled an incident which occurred on one of those evening visits to her sister at Haworth Parsonage of which mention has been made. Some one asked her if Mr. Brontë did not take salt instead of sugar with his tea. ‘Nay, he put both in,’ was the reply; ‘I remember one time I was up there when my sister fetched the tea things out and I said, “I’ll have a taste of tea with sugar and salt.”’

With this incident, which happened maybe seventy years ago, I will end these reminiscences. I have written them as they were told to me, without attempt, which would have been vain, to give them literary form. That they are too slight to be worthy of record the reader may judge them. But are not the slight and trivial things of life just the ones that imprint themselves indelibly on the tablets of memory and recall to the mind’s eye every detail and circumstance, light and colour, which go to make the scene of which they formed a part?

C. HOLMES CAUTLEY.

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AT WESSEL'S FARM.

HER eyes were of that soft brown that one associates with peaty tarns on a Scotch moor, eyes that generally mean short sight and lack of steadfastness—though admiring man does not often look beyond their velvety beauty and the limited outlook that is the companion of faithlessness.

The present is generally wide and deep enough to drown himself in; and who is going to trouble about the future when the eyes are tear-filled, a dark head is bowed in despair, and a faltering voice gives utterance to the solution that occurs to the outlook of eighteen?

'Oh, Johnny, I *can't* bear it! Can't you take me with you?' And, as Johnny only held her tighter and kissed the tear-stained cheeks: 'Oh! as a nurse, Johnny? Other women are going.'

Such moments kill any humour, however lively it may be at other times. The idea of Nellie Devlin as a nurse! The possibility of anyone's comfort, let alone life, depending on her soft ignorance and sweet selfishness failed to call up a smile.

Johnny was John Hurst, a nephew of Hurst of Hurstmere. A younger son—with an old father and mother to be left in the big, lonely house, while he with so many of his class and friends went off to the war—and there was Nellie Devlin as well.

Pretty, brown-eyed Nellie, who had never known a thwarted fancy or bitterer disappointment in her eighteen years than John Hurst's attempts at disguising his love under a pretence of flirtation with some other girl at a tennis party, with half an eye, as Nellie well knew, following her movements and noting every look and laugh, until there came the terrible announcement—England was in need of her sons' help; and following the call came the answer from the slothful, the enthusiastic, the brave, and the idle.

That had been the beginning of the story; the end——

The end was this hot evening following a hotter day. The dull brown of the veldt taking on a reflection of the crimson gold of sunset, the harsh outlines of the farm softening as the veil of night descended, and John Hurst, no longer boyish and careless, but with

lines of anxiety on his face, the result of two years' exposure and toil, a harder look in his blue English eyes, his uniform soiled and worn, resting on the wide stoep of the deserted farm, while his men rummaged about in the hope an exhaustive search might produce some unexpected delicacy to add to their supper, before the order to fire it should precede the night march across the bare veldt to some other harbour of refuge.

Their actions, however deplorable, held the advantage of only demanding obedience; the right or wrong of everything was narrowed for them into that simple creed. It was far harder for their commander, sitting on the stoep smoking a dubious cigarette, which so far was his only share of the plunder, striving to see his way clearly and feel quite sure that eventually he would be able to render a satisfactory account of his work both to God and man.

Theoretically it had all seemed so simple. For a fortnight now he had been tracking with a handful of men a commando that vanished as soon as ever it got into sight. Night after night he had felt confident that another day would accomplish his task, then—the hard daylight, the bare land without apparently a sheltering tree, had swallowed up all traces of the illusive foe, and instead, tucked away in the shelter of a kopje, had appeared a farm. Yes, of course the name rang familiar enough—Wessel's farm, and Wessel was the commandant he was pursuing! How obvious it all was! Not surprising that he knew his whereabouts! To the enemy it had been hide-and-seek in his own house; and now as the shadows fell and the calm moonless night followed the daylight there had been little doubt in Major Hurst's mind where the homing bird would be found. He could imagine it all. A good supper, an encouraging word from his wife, a feed for the horses, a mock at the pursuing Englishmen, and then before daylight he would be off, refitted for his work. That had been Jan Wessel's plan, and for John Hurst it would mean his hour of triumph.

In the dark he and his men stole nearer and nearer until the farm was surrounded, then suddenly the peaceful night was startled by shouts and cries and a voice calling on those within to surrender. A moment, scarcely it seemed a moment's breathless pause before the door was thrown open and a woman with a baby in her arms stood on the stoep calling down curses on the noise and commotion, on the men who were frightening a lonely woman and her children. Her wrathful voice, her curses, silenced the

astonished soldiers, who sank back awed by her gaunt personality, the fury of her invective. The baby in her arms, awakened from its sleep, howled; and clinging to her skirts were three girls of various ages from fifteen downwards. Certainly it was a scene of bathos. John Hurst was rendered by it as speechless as she was voluble.

'Call yourselves men,' the shrill voice cried, while the baby shrieked and the girls blubbered, 'to wake us up like that in the middle of the night, frightening the children to death! And what for? What do you expect after all this to find here? Hunt for yourselves if you don't believe me. A few mealies and some cold tea! That's what we live on, and are thankful to get.'

Then there was a sudden calm, the door was banged, and the tall woman and little troop had disappeared, and Major Hurst was left facing his men. Also his orders which admitted of no evasion—'Turn out the inhabitants and set fire to the farm. The women and children to be sent to a concentration camp.' That anyhow had not been difficult to carry out.

With the first glimmer of dawn, to the farm-cart had been harnessed such a team as could be raised, and in a sullen gloom that had succeeded the fury of the night Mrs. Wessel, after hurling into the cart such things as might be of use, her baby in her arms, with her little girls, had got into the cart, and, behind an ill-assorted pair of scraggy ponies, had been driven off by a soldier, a small escort accompanying her.

'Take them to the railway line and put them on the first train, and bring back something to eat in the cart in return for them. We are going to find nothing here, it's evident.'

For a few minutes Major Hurst watched the start, the uncertainly corded odds and ends swaying on the roadless way, the woman crouched up in the attitude of misery and rage, his ruffled spirits only faintly soothed by the fact that the little girls had been so far won over as to accept his dainties in the shape of some lumps of sugar and a valued hunk of chocolate. The mother, without the lifting of an eyelid or recognition of his presence, had drunk a cup of coffee, eaten a slice of bread, stilled the baby's wails at her breast, then had driven away without a questioning word or look at the home which she knew was fated—or one glance towards the waiting men.

John Hurst felt as if her dumb hatred, that recognised its helplessness and forbore a useless cry or word, was overwhelming; that

the very air was poisoned by its vindictiveness. He only breathed again when the little group was lost to sight.

Another inmate had been discovered—a surly-looking lad of twenty. His English was so inadequate that it was difficult to gain from him the reason of his presence.

‘My brother,’ was all the information that had been got out of the woman; though later the sergeant explained his presence by a limp and a ball in his leg.

‘He’s been wounded, and sent here to be nursed; but he’s all right now, or very nearly so.’

This question was much easier to deal with. An English gaol!

Major Hurst felt relief as this was settled; and all difficulties being disposed of, nothing now remained but to carry out the final order. Fire the farm, then call his men together and depart. It was evening before all was accomplished, and he found himself awaiting the final moments on the stoep. A few more whiffs of his cigarette, the last drain of his so-called coffee, then his horse was brought round and he prepared to mount. With the reins in his hand, his foot in the stirrup, the animal made an unexpected movement, there was the hum of a bullet close to his ear, the consciousness of a sudden blow, and his left arm was hanging by his side; the frightened horse starting away, a soldier in pursuit; and rising on all sides angry words and cries, ‘The prisoner!’

Yes, the prisoner. Major Hurst, dazed for a moment, wended his way up the steps of the stoep back to the chair he had left.

‘Bring the prisoner, sergeant. How did he get a rifle? Where did he find it? No, I am not much hurt; it didn’t touch the bone. Here, doctor, come and tie it up. Damned carelessness!’ as the men fell back. ‘They must have overlooked a rifle somewhere.’

The next minute Sergeant Nicholson was back, the fire of excitement and discovery in voice and eye. ‘There’s another of them, sir; a pair of them. The rifle’s lying on the floor; they’ve shot it off, one or other of them.’

‘A pair of them!’ Major Hurst repeated. ‘You’re a fine searcher! If you look a little harder you’ll find all Jan Wessel’s commando hidden away here, as we expected.’

‘It’s only a boy—the prisoner’s brother. He won’t, or can’t, speak English. The prisoner doesn’t deny it; he says he fired, and he knows,’ the sergeant added grimly, ‘what he’s got to get for doing it.’

'Fetch him here,' John said curtly; and in another minute the sullen, big, limping youth was brought before him. This time a slim boy by his side, a handcuff linking the two.

Major Hurst, sick and faint from the shock and loss of blood, pulled himself up in his chair.

'Fall back, sergeant. Wait a moment, doctor. Now, which of you two fired that shot?'

'I did,' the big, sullen youth answered glibly enough.

'You've learnt English, I see! Enough, I expect, to know what it means when a prisoner fires off a rifle at an officer. You can go and think it over during the night.'

'Yes, sergeant, take them away, and put them in a safe place this time. Search the room well; put sentries round the farm. I shall stay here to-night. Make me a bed on the stoep. Go on, doctor, bind up my arm and get me a drop of brandy, if there is such a thing.'

All through the interview the second prisoner never moved or lifted his eyes from the ground. His dark head was covered with a tangle of roughly cut curly hair. Fifteen, he could not be older, Major Hurst decided as he watched him walk away.

What folly not to have found him and sent him away with the little girls! What a muddle the whole business had been! Mismanagement from first to last, and now in addition to the total of ill-luck, this final straw!

'Where was the rifle hidden?'

'In the bed.'

There was a gleam of satisfaction in the glowering blue eyes of the elder prisoner at the sergeant's answer.

'That's where the boy was also hidden,' he added.

'What damned folly not to have found him!'

'He looked like a bolster,' the sergeant solemnly replied; and at the words the faintest flicker of a smile came and went into the prisoner's staring blue eyes.

As the guard took them away the boy murmured a few words to his elder, which Major Hurst's limited knowledge of the Taal was able to interpret into 'What did he say?'

He could guess from the reply he could not hear what the answer might be, though he could not be certain, as there was no answering emotion in the little brown-faced companion.

'What are you going to do with them?' the doctor questioned

as, after bandaging the arm and administering brandy, he prepared to leave his patient.

'He ought to be shot,' was John's tentative reply. 'He's very young,' he added after a moment's pause.

'Not too young to know what he's up to. He's one of the commando you were after. It cures others,' the doctor added, 'if you're not lenient.'

'He's got to think it over in the night; that'll cure him—and I'm not dead,' John replied uncomfortably.

'That's the fault of his shot, not his intention.'

Major Hurst shut his eyes resolutely, whether from a desire for sleep or for silence the doctor could not decide. He did not hazard another word.

Under the swift-falling dark, the stars stealing out in the clear sky, John Hurst was left also with the night to think it over in.

Not a sound except the soft occasional sigh of the wind over the dry veldt, the tread of the sentry, the movements of the men, gradually subsiding into stillness, and under the charm and silence and the influence of a soothing draught his quickened pulses quietened, and he slowly approached the border-land of sleep—had almost set foot on the farther shore—when he was recalled to life and the present with all its anxieties and troubles, its pains and responsibilities, by the sound of Sergeant Nicholson's voice, hoarse with the effort to speak quietly and wake him gently.

In a moment he was sitting up, the alert soldier of all these months of training, ready for anything, however unexpected.

'Well, sergeant, what is it?'

'Please, sir, it's the prisoner.'

Such bathos, after all the possibilities that had rushed through his feverish brain! He fell back on his heap of pillows with a cross growl for his so nearly captured sleep.

'He's most obstreperous.'

Major Hurst opened his eyes again, with something unusually angry in his voice and expression.

'What do you mean? Put him in the stable; you've got men enough. Don't bother me.'

'It's the little one,' the sergeant calmly continued. 'He's crying fearful and banging on the door so as no one can sleep.'

'Take him out and put him with a soldier—perhaps he's hungry. Anyhow manage it somehow and leave me in peace.'

'He's like a cat, sir, scratching and squealing, and says he won't stop till he's spoke to you.'

'To me!' John opened his eyes again that the draught was attempting to dominate. 'What does he want with me?'

'Perhaps he thinks that you'll understand him.' That was possible, though what could he have to say?

'What nonsense!' Whatever it might be it could keep till morning—it *must* keep.

John Hurst sighed and turned away from the lantern and Nicholson's perplexed stupidity and shut his eyes resolutely.

As he did so, through the solemn stillness of the night pierced an angry childish cry:

'Let me out! Let me out!'

With a word whose force was multiplied by the tone in which it was pronounced he sat up again.

'Where's the doctor?'

'He's asleep, sir. Shall I fetch him?'

'No.' If he could sleep through that it was simply barbarous to wake him.

'Fetch him here,' Major Hurst said shortly.

'Oh, he understands all right. He's only shamming. You heard yourself he can speak some English. Quite enough.'

And a minute later in the ring of light from the lantern, Sergeant Nicholson's big hand grasping his collar, stood the cause of all the row. A very small cause he looked as he wriggled about in the soldier's clutch and tried to face his gaoler.

'Now, you young devil, what does all this mean? What are you kicking up this row for? No use pretending you don't understand—I heard you speaking English; you understand it as well as I do.'

'Send him away.' It was an unexpected reply.

Turning the full glare of the lantern upon him, Major Hurst looked him over carefully. Even with one arm useless there was not much cause for alarm.

'Step back, sergeant; wait at the bottom of the steps.'

'Now you rascal, you see,' touching the revolver by his side and with a significant movement towards the soldier, 'don't you think you can give us the slip. If you do you'll be winged, you may make sure.'

'No, no, I won't run!' The words eager and hurried rushed forth. 'I want to tell you——'

'Well, look up. What have you to tell? Be quick about it.' Again he turned the glare of the covered lantern full on the speaker and for a moment stared in silence.

The sergeant's words were easily verified. Disfigured with crying, the eyelids swollen above the dark mournful eyes, the tears still dropping from the long lashes, the childish mouth quivering as 'It was *me—me*—that did it, not *him*,' in faltering uncertain English.

'Did it?' John echoed in bewilderment, and then, of course, understood.

'No, I can't say many words in English, but, you understand, I—I shoot,' and a small brown hand touched John's bandage; 'you understand. Not *him*,' still clinging to the two English words that seemed most certain to tell his story.

'Did he tell you to?'

'No, no.' Again the quick passionate outcry. 'He's a soldier; he would not do such a thing. I do it alone. I see the rifle hidden, I pick it up, I look from the window and see you, and I shoot.'

'And you know when men—or boys—do such things that they are shot themselves for trying to kill a man like that, even if they don't succeed?'

'Not *him*.' Back to the old anxiety. 'He didn't know what I was doing.'

'He admitted having done it himself,' John said in as clear a pronouncement of Dutch as he could arrive at. And the boy understood, he could see. 'One of you is telling a lie; I've got to find out which of you it is.'

'Me, me tell the truth; he tell the lie.'

If there was truth in heaven or earth Major Hurst could have taken his oath it faced him in the small terrified face, marks of dust and dirt and tears carelessly left to tell their tale—the eager prayer for belief in the dark eyes under the swollen lids.

'Well, I believe you,' he said on the spur of the look, before adding, 'Why did he say he had done it? You are his little brother, I suppose?' There was the faintest shake of the curly head.

'How old are you?'

'Sixteen.'

'And why did you hide here? Why didn't you go with your mother and sisters?'

Again there was that shadowy denial. 'Not my mother.'

'Then what were you doing here?'

There was a quick movement, the alert movement of a squirrel, and Major Hurst felt the thought of escape rush through the slight figure, checked at once as the half-turn brought big Sergeant Nicholson in sight in the gloom below the stoep steps. A remembering glance towards John's hand on his revolver, and he stood still again, with a sigh, stormy and tearful, that shook him from head to foot.

'Now I may go back to him?' Again the words were in Dutch. 'You understand—I did it. You'—he came a step nearer and looked boldly into Major Hurst's face—'You will not kill him?'

It certainly sounded very brutal in that childish voice.

'No,' he replied, 'he is a prisoner of war. He will go to Pretoria and be tried there.'

'And me, too?'

'No.' Again John looked judicially at him. 'You are too young. I shall send you after Mrs. Wessel; you can stay with her for the present. You say she's not your mother; but she's a friend, you were in her house; and you're a mischievous little devil, you see,' touching his bandaged arm, 'and must be locked up to keep you out of harm's way.'

There was no reply—simply a stare of terrified sorrow, while the tears again began welling over and pouring down the thin grimy cheeks. But words or tears alike were of no avail. The situation had evolved itself. Major Hurst felt that he had arrived at the right solution, and a very good one too.

'Now I shall tell the sergeant to take you to another room and lock you up. There must be no more noise, mind. You must go to sleep and let us go to sleep too. Stop crying and promise that you'll be quiet.'

He sat up with the intention of calling the sergeant, but, before he could speak, the hand on his revolver was clasped suddenly, the uncertain English words faltered out again—'No, *please, please*, let me go to him; he's so unhappy and alone. When I know that if you shoot him, it's *me—me* who kill him, I could not wait or be quiet. I was mad. Please now, if I be quiet, let me go back to him!'

'Yes,' said John quite quietly, though his own feverish pulses seemed throbbing like drums in his ears, drowning all other sounds; 'but you must tell me why, and who you are.' Though of course

he knew it—it was as if he had always known it—as he took the small brown hands in his own unwounded one.

‘You’re a girl!’

‘No, no. His wife,’ and then a few explanatory words. ‘We were married to-day; I was here nursing him. Mrs. Wessel is his sister. When she said you would make him prisoner and separate us, I put on her boy’s clothes and let her go so that we might stay together.’

Major Hurst listened to the end of the little story before calling to the sergeant, and then he only said:

‘Sergeant, take this boy back to the other prisoner. It’s all right; he’s promised to be quiet now.’

Major Hurst was the type of ordinary Englishman to whom the unexpected always has in theory something supernatural about it, and yet when it does come, his commonsense knows how to deal with it.

Perhaps it was fever, but it seemed to him, looking back, that from the moment the slim figure had shrunk close to him—away from Sergeant Nicholson’s clutching hand—he had been only waiting to say those words: ‘You are a girl.’

When all was still again and the moonless night at its darkest, he got off his uncomfortable bed, and, entering the house, made his way to the room that served as a prison.

The little prisoner was asleep, or apparently so, curled up in an arm-chair. Seen thus she was very small, her dark curly head pillowed on the arm of the youth kneeling beside her.

As he rose to his feet at the lantern’s light, the small figure in the chair sat up, rubbing the sleep out of the soft dark eyes, then, recognising the visitor, turned and clung with a little frightened cry to the other.

‘You speak English,’ Major Hurst said, ‘I know. You will understand quite well what I say.’ There was a sullen assent. ‘You are not well yet. I don’t want prisoners. I can’t do with them. You know’—he paused and looked straight into the blue eyes fixed on him—‘you know where Wessel’s Commando is. It’s close by.’ There was a momentary waver in the steady eyes looking into his. ‘If you were put outside this farm you would find your way all right. I know all about it, you see. In the morning I shall leave you here to find your way to him.’

It was the little prisoner who seemed to understand. There was no word or look towards their captor, only two arms suddenly

clasped round the neck of the surly youth, and in the silence John walked away.

In the bustle and confusion of the early start Major Hurst called up Sergeant Nicholson. 'You can turn the prisoners out—those two boys, I mean. No good our being bothered with them. The elder is ill, and the younger only a child. He ought to have been sent with Mrs. Wessel.'

'He's quite old enough to do harm,' the sergeant retorted, with a glance at the bandaged arm.

'He's a little rascal,' John said calmly, 'but he won't do any more harm; the other youth will look after him. If there's a horse they can have it; they can both get on it.'

On a wretched half-starved screw the boys jumped up eagerly enough. Major Hurst standing on the stoep watched them start. At the last moment he went closer and said:

'Take her out of this and put her in charge of some one; she's too young to run these risks. Get her to some safe place.'

'Yes, I'm going to.' The sullen despair was no longer in the clear blue eyes. His youth was surprising—eighteen at the outside—with that happier expression on his stern face.

'And don't you go shooting men,' he added severely to the dark curly head, as the face was averted, 'or you'll get yourself and others into trouble.'

'No, no. I'm sorry.'

It was very inadequate regret, Major Hurst felt, as he realised the fever from the sleepless worried night, the disapproval of the doctor, the general discomfort of the day's ride in front of him before a resting-place would be reached.

The whole episode had proved as big a fiasco as could well be imagined. Mrs. Wessel, her three little girls and squalling baby, with a wagon load of household odds and ends—all he had to show for the fortnight's chase; a burning farm to mark the end of the misadventure—only Sergeant Nicholson's grudging praise to console.

'I am glad, sir, you sent off those two prisoners. It's bad enough as it is, but if we'd had that scowling youngster with us and that screeching cat, I don't know what would have happened. I shall never forget the way he went on last night. It was enough to run one's blood cold. You've done quite right, sir.'

It was not often a word of approval fell from Sergeant Nicholson, and it was a moment when any approval had its value, even though Major Hurst knew it was quite undeserved. It had not been with

the virtuous intention of lessening everyone's burden or adding to everyone's comfort that he had let them go, or even because during his night vigil he had decided the cause of war would be better served by their escape, but solely because two tearful dark eyes had looked into his and had made his heart thump with the memory of clinging hands and a soft pleading voice—'Oh! Johnny, *can't* you take me with you?'

That had happened two years ago, and letters now came very rarely: they went astray, he often told himself. One, torn with many readings, was in the pocket just where the little enemy's hand had touched his.

He took it out and looked at the sprawling school-girl writing and read the few well-known words that said so little, and to him meant so much. He was thankful there had been no mistake this time at any rate, and that little dark-eyed girl had got away with the man she cared for.

'Yours, Nellie Devlin.'

He was on his horse as he read the name, the flames bursting out of the doomed house. He gave a sigh for the day when all these horrors should be over and he back in his peaceful English home. What added bliss then to remember that other dark-eyed girl had not pleaded with him in vain.

Then they all rode off as the flames raced and rose and fell in the windless silence. And eventually the war did come to an end and everyone who was not asleep on the veldt returned home to claim what was left for claiming after the three years' absence.

For Major John Hurst, D.S.O., there was nothing.

Nellie Devlin had fallen under another spell. The other had been at home and had not had to trust to scant letters to keep him in mind. And he was rich, so there had been no need to postpone the wedding.

Long before he could start for England, John heard all about it from a well-informed friend, which saved him a pang on arrival, as Lady Easthampton had not remembered in one of those few treasured letters which had followed him about the veldt to tell him of her engagement.

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BENBOW AND HIS LAST FIGHT.

There's a far bell ringing
 At the setting of the sun ;
 And a phantom voice is singing
 Of the great days done.
 There's a far bell ringing
 And a phantom voice is singing
 Of renown forever clinging
 To the great days done.

HENRY NEWBOLT.

It was in a certain shipbreaker's yard that I came upon the name of the *Bristol*. Beyond the wall, upon the river that glinted in the sunshine like blue flame, there might be seen the ragged shell of an old wooden battleship, and all around me where I stood were the figureheads of others that had come to the same dreary end. One, a tall figure of Britannia in a carved wooden cuirass, had belonged to the *Albion* ; another, a gaunt male image with a truculent whiskered face, was all that was left of the *Gloucester*. A wooden gentleman, ten feet high at least, in uniform with a star upon his breast, had once frowned insolently, with back thrown head, from the bows of the *Grampian*. A helmed figure had glared out upon the white water that danced before the forefoot of the *Castor* ; a patriotic person in a Scotch bonnet had directed the *Glasgow* upon the path of fame. The fine stern face, the high nose and double chin of Lord Hood, uniformed and imposing, were worn with much voyaging and the lash of many winds, and would feel never again the smarting tingle of the spray. But it was the name of the *Bristol* beneath the wooden shape of a woman with long curling hair that set me thinking of Benbow.

That *Bristol* to which this figurehead had belonged would only be the descendant of that ship of war which played so odd a part in the admiral's career. For it was in 1681 that John Benbow, master of the *Nonsuch*, was sentenced by court martial to forfeit three months' pay, to be disposed of for the use of the wounded men on board the *Adventure*, and to ask Captain Booth's pardon on board his Majesty's ship *Bristol*, declaring that he had had no malicious intent in speaking certain words ; all the commanders

of the fleet being present, and a boat's crew from each ship's company.

He was always a plain speaker, was John Benbow, and his rough tongue had got him into trouble at the very beginning of his career in the Navy, even as, at the end, it lashed certain captains to treacherous mutiny, and withheld from himself a splendid triumph that should have crowned his fame. It would appear that in both cases his rough speech was not unjustified by facts, but, at the time of the first, he was poor and unknown and friendless, and he had to pay a penalty of some humiliation. The second affair was widely different. Then he was an admiral upon foreign service, almost all-powerful, strong enough even to override the law. And grimly, relentlessly, he hounded to their deaths the captains who had failed him, and, by a strange coincidence, it chanced that two were shot at Plymouth upon the deck of that same *Bristol* upon which years ago he had been compelled to make apology. Benbow himself had succumbed months before to his wounds and his bitter rage and chagrin. One may wonder if they met beyond the grave, the stern implacable admiral, risen from the ranks, and the 'fine gentlemen' captains who had avenged by treachery the 'briskness' of his tongue. . . .

Benbow was born at Shrewsbury in 1653, and it seems fairly certain that he was the son of a tanner. Which is, of course, a matter of the very smallest import. William I., King of England by right of his own good sword and brain, was the grandson of a tanner—and a man of some little might. Although certainly it would seem that William was not possessed of sufficient humour to smile at the humble strain in his blood. As the wretched folk of Alençon bore witness in their agonies, when those walls upon which they had dared to hang raw hides in insulting jest, had been stormed by the savage Duke at the head of his men. But from what one can glean about Benbow, it does not appear that he was the type of man to trouble about his lack of birth. It was a time in our Navy when men either rose by their own merits 'from the bilge,' or owed their rank entirely to family influence or Parliamentary interest. Wherefore there were two parties in the Navy and much ill feeling, and with these facts in mind one has less difficulty in understanding the tragedy that darkened Benbow's last days.

Tradition is uncertain whether he was apprenticed to a butcher or a waterman, but tradition has no doubt that the sea was calling to him and that he hearkened to its voice. The lot of a boy who

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ran away to sea in those harsh days would be no silken one, but through all his life Benbow never lacked toughness of fibre, moral or physical. In 1678 it is to be noted that he had passed from the merchant service into the navy, and now fortune was certainly his friend. For we find him in the Mediterranean as master's mate on the *Rupert* under Captain Herbert, who was to become the Earl of Torrington and a man of note and influence for a while. Perhaps even a Benbow could not hope to rise rapidly in this curious world without a powerful friend. He was able to prove his worth to Herbert in certain actions with Algerine corsairs, and in '79 he was promoted to be master of the *Nonsuch*. In her he was successively under Rooke, Shovel and Wheler, the first two of whom were to rise very high, and unquestionably all three were impressed by the dogged, independent young man, and kept him in their minds. In '81 there came the odd affair of the court martial and apology, which has been mentioned. The *Nonsuch* captured a certain Algerine cruiser which had previously beaten off the attack of Captain Booth in the *Adventure*. The merits of that sea fight are not to be judged at this date, but, as was natural, the men of the *Nonsuch* were guilty of much rough chaff at the expense of Captain Booth and his men, and Benbow was so rash and thoughtless as to repeat the talk in public. Captain Booth brought him to a court martial, and he was found guilty, but with the saving clause 'that he had only repeated the words after another.' His sentence has been told, but it may be added that the three months pay which he forfeited amounted to £12 15s., which is the sum duly checked against his name in the pay-book of the *Nonsuch*. The sentence was perhaps lenient for those days, and yet, remembering Benbow's grim pride, one fancies that he suffered keenly, one doubts if that public apology was uttered with much grace.

The *Nonsuch* was paid off in November, 1681, and Benbow would probably return to the merchant service. Perhaps, although it appears unlikely, in 1686, as tradition has it, he really owned and commanded a ship named the *Benbow Frigate*, engaged in the Levant trade; perhaps the oft-told tale of the Moors' heads is devoid of exaggeration. It does not greatly matter. The deed it tells of was worthy of Benbow, was in keeping with his character, and such tales always spring up about the name of one who looms heroic in the eyes of the great public that loves a Homeric fighter. Campbell, who was a friend of Benbow's son-in-law, Mr. Paul Calton, and who seems to have loved Benbow's memory, tells the story with huge

unction. A Sallee Rover attacked the *Benbow Frigate*, ventured even to come to grips with her by boarding, but found that she had caught a Tartar. (One does not imagine that Benbow, the man who, middle-aged admiral as he was, led his boarders three times in person in his last great fight, was an especially pleasant person to meet in his youth in defence of his own decks!) When the Moors drew off in some haste, and crowded sail in search of an easier prey, they left thirteen of their dead behind them on the frigate, and from those thirteen bodies Benbow cut off the heads and flung them into a tub of pork pickle. At Cadiz he landed in some state with a negro servant strutting behind him carrying those grim trophies in a sack. When the revenue officers questioned him as to the contents of the sack, he answered 'Salt provisions for my own use.' But they insisted on taking him before the magistrates, who ordained, courteously enough, that the sack must be opened. 'I told you,' says the captain sternly, 'that they were salt provisions for my own use. Caesar, throw them down upon the table, and, gentlemen, if you like them, they are at your service!' Whereupon, says Campbell, the magistrates were filled with admiration for so stark a defence against long odds, and sent an account of the affair to Charles II. of Spain. He on his part sent for the English captain, made him a handsome present, and wrote of him in such terms to James II. of England that Benbow was given a ship in the Navy. Which makes a pretty story with the traditionally happy ending. Unfortunately, and as a matter of sober fact, Benbow did not re-enter the Navy until after the Revolution.

But then he rose with extraordinary speed. On June 1, 1689, he was given his commission as third lieutenant of the *Elizabeth*, and on September 20 of the same year he was appointed captain of the *York*, seventy guns. In October he was transferred to the *Bonaventure*, and in November to the *Britannia*. Almost certainly he owed this wonderful promotion to Herbert's interest, and it is possible that he was aboard the fleet which landed the invading Prince of Orange at Torbay. He was enabled later to repay a portion of his debt to his patron. At the court martial which followed the disgraceful sea fight off Beachy Head, it had been stated by the enemies of the Earl of Torrington 'that he was scarcely, during the whole action, within gunshot of the French line.' Benbow, who had acted as master of the fleet aboard the *Royal Sovereign*, the flagship, deposed that his ship had been within half gunshot of the enemy for an hour. His evidence probably served to win Lord

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Torrington his acquittal, although the King never forgave the admiral the incapacity, to use no stronger term, which he had displayed in the action.

Benbow, who acted as master of the flagship *Britannia* at Barfleur and La Hogue under Admiral Russell, had been appointed master attendant first of Chatham Dockyard and afterwards of Deptford. He held this office for six years, with occasional interludes when he was sent to sea upon special service. For instance, in September '93, he commanded a flotilla of bomb-ships and fire-ships that was sent against St. Malo. The action lasted three days, and was more or less ineffectual, as indeed, to be entirely frank, was much of Benbow's work throughout his career. Almost invariably his subordinates seem to have failed him. It would appear that he had not the happy knack of getting the best out of his officers which has distinguished most great leaders. On the other hand, the common sailors appear almost to have worshipped him. Doubtless they felt that he was no fine gentleman, but one of themselves. Campbell says that he was the one unlibelled and uncensured officer under William. The truth was, he adds, that the seamen generally considered Benbow as their greatest patron; one who not only used them well, while under his command, but was always ready to interpose in their favour, as far as his interest went, when they were ill treated by others. Against St. Malo he sent in a great fire-ship of his own invention, which seems to have been fashioned upon a more liberal scale than any former craft of the sort. She grounded before reaching her proper station, but nevertheless her explosion did immense damage to the town. 'It shook the whole town like an earthquake, broke all glass and earthenware for three leagues round, and struck off the roofs of three hundred houses.' Benbow in his keenness was dissatisfied with the result achieved by the action, and brought one of the commanders of his bomb-ships to a court martial for not going in closer when ordered to do so. He failed however to procure a conviction. In '94 he was in command of similar operations against Dunkirk, and his flotilla was covered by his old commander, now Sir Cloudesly Shovel, and his fleet. The French had blocked the entrance to Dunkirk, and nothing could be done. Next summer Benbow was again in command of fire-ships, when another ineffectual attempt was made against St. Malo by the English and Dutch fleets under Admirals Lord Berkeley and Von Almonde. Afterwards Benbow was detached in command of the fire-ships and some frigates to attack Granville,

which he shelled for some hours. Upon the return of the Fleet to the Downs he gave up his command, and there is evidence of more friction, this time between his superior officer and himself. 'Benbow is quitting his ship,' wrote Lord Berkeley on July 23. 'I cannot imagine the reason. He pretends sickness, but I think it is only feigned.' And a few days later he wrote, 'As to Captain Benbow, I know of no difference between him and me, nor have we had any. He has no small obligation to me —' And then he goes on to hint that Benbow's head had been turned by some of 'the foolish printed papers' alluding to him as 'the famous Captain Benbow.' Which suggestion seems unworthy either of its maker or Benbow.

And the Admiralty, at any rate, appear to have had nothing but praise for his conduct. They directed that he 'should be paid as rear-admiral during the time he has been employed this summer on the coast of France . . . as a reward for his good service,' and next spring they gave him the rank as well. To rise in seven years from third lieutenant to rear-admiral is rapid work indeed! Even Henty never dared to give such swift promotion to one of his boy heroes! In April '96, apparently before the confirmation of his new step, he was present at an attempt to bombard Calais, and Sir Cloudesly Shovel writes to the Admiralty. . . . 'Captain Benbow had the flesh torn off from his leg by an accident on board one of the bomb-vessels in the action, and, I doubt, will hardly be able to stir within a fortnight.' Later in the year he was appointed commander-in-chief of the squadron before Dunkirk, with special orders to endeavour to intercept Jean Bart's squadron and to protect the English and Dutch shipping. But once again his ill luck pursued him, and, since the Admiralty had neglected to provide him with the clean ships he had asked for, Jean Bart, that dashing slippery commander, contrived with ease to elude the Englishman. And then there followed the insecure Peace of Ryswick.

There was little expectation upon either side that the treaty would endure, and in '98 it was judged wise to send Benbow to the West Indies with a squadron that he might protect our colonies in the event of French aggression. He also had especial orders to hunt down the pirates that swarmed in those waters, and in particular the notorious Captain Kidd, who, having recently sailed with a commission against pirates, had himself seen fit to hoist the black flag. There is little need to recount in detail Benbow's work

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in the Indies. Suffice it to say, that he did good work with insufficient means and bore himself towards truculent Spanish governors in a style that Drake himself could scarcely have bettered. Let one instance of his bearing be enough. The governor of Carthagena had seized two English merchant ships, and proposed to add them to an expedition which he was fitting out against the luckless Scotch colony at Darien. He declined to listen to Benbow's first courteous request that the ships should be released. Whereupon the Englishman hinted not obscurely that a bombardment of the town would follow. 'If the ships were not delivered within twenty-four hours he would come in and fetch them, and the governor would have an opportunity of seeing what respect an English officer had for his word.' The governor released the ships.

Kidd was taken, although not by Benbow, and in 1700 the Admiral returned to England, having won, it would appear, the golden opinion of the colonies. He was appointed first to the command in the Downs, and then to serve as Vice-Admiral of the Blue under Sir George Rooke. The year 1701, with his appointment for the second time to the command in the West Indies, closes this inadequate sketch of his earlier work, and brings me to that last great fight which won him his enduring fame, and about which, even now, it is difficult to write with proper chilling moderation and restraint.

His achievements up to this date may not appear especially brilliant in cold detail, but it seems certain that his reputation with the people at home had been steadily growing. Evelyn recounts a conversation which he had in 1690 with Sir Anthony Dean at the table of Mr. Pepys. They had both held office under James II., and it was natural that they should contrast his naval administration with that of his successor. James was the unhappy possessor of most of the faults that a king can have, but it is certain that his heart was in the prosperity of his navy, and it cannot be denied that it was in a healthier state under his care than in William's time. Sir Anthony deplored 'the sad condition of our navy, as now governed by inexperienced men since this Revolution. He mentioned what exceeding advantage we of this navy had by being the first who built *fregats*, and added that it would be the best expedient to be masters of the sea, if they would leave off building huge great ships, which were for nothing but to gratify gentlemen commanders, who must have all their effeminate accommodations, and would not submit to the fatigue which those who were bred

seamen would undergo in these swift *fregats*.' It is impossible, say the authors of the 'History of Shrewsbury,' to doubt that Benbow was in their thoughts in this conversation. And as they add, his light and active figure in his portrait at Greenwich Hospital is not more sharply contrasted to the sleepy, full-bottomed perukes that surround him, than the promptitude and alacrity of the frigates in which he generally served were to their unwieldy three-deckers.

His portrait is one of the many surprises that await the student of Benbow's character and career. Somehow one expects to be confronted by a grim bulldog type of face, that is not without a suggestion of plebeian coarseness. Instead, one has the impression of sprightly elegance. You might well take the picture of Benbow to be the portrait of one of those gentlemen officers for whom he had such contempt. The lips are rather full, the eyes, beneath strongly marked eyebrows, are fairly wide apart. The face framed in the curly wig of the period is entirely pleasing. Only the squareness of the chin gives evidence of the pluck and iron tenacity of the man, that at need could rise above physical torture and apparent failure.

It was a tradition in the Navy that he first introduced the practice, afterwards revived by Anson, of heaving the ship close to the enemy before pouring in the broadside. And indeed one can believe that the longing, shared afterwards by Nelson, always to get to close grips with the enemy, was characteristic of Benbow. He made his name as a commander of frigates, as a swift keen fighter, and it is in that character that he was loved by the people of his day, as he has been loved through all the following years.

For indeed it must be admitted by the impartial student that, judged solely by his work, he has small claims to rank with the greatest of our admirals. All that he attempted was at least partially ineffectual; no great victory stands to his credit; the treachery of his captains makes even his last great fight one of the most shameful, as it is also one of the most splendid, episodes in the history of our navy. Charnock's summing up of his character seems to convey a fair impression of his nature, both in its strength and its weakness. 'As to his character, his bitterest enemy cannot deny him the honest reputation of a brave, active and able commander; while, on the other hand, his warmest friends and admirers must allow he wanted those conciliatory manners which were necessary to secure the personal attachment and regard of the officers he commanded. Honesty, integrity and blunt sincerity were the

prominent feature of his private character. . . .’ It is certain that Nelson owed something of his brilliant success to the love and trust which he inspired in his captains, and a leader who cannot ensure at least loyalty from his subordinates is either most unfortunate or peculiarly ill fitted for high command. Well, perhaps one cannot find justification for Benbow’s great and enduring fame as an admiral, but at least one can find with certainty that he was something, a great deal, of a man.

It is significant that William trusted him, believed in him always, and William was something of a judge of men. There was between the two a certain similarity of nature. Both were brusque in manner, both could be harsh-tongued, even brutal, if men angered them, both were brave, physically and spiritually—utterly, entirely brave. But William could be, and habitually was, lenient, scornfully lenient, to treachery and failure. Benbow, the lesser man, had no such tolerance. He did not love failure; it was not his way to condone it, to deal lightly with it. He proved that in a rather terrible fashion, even when the hand of death was already heavy upon him. He saw to it that Kirby and Wade died for their treacherous mutiny; William, in his place, would probably have sneered grimly at such paltry folk, have been content with their dismissal from the service. But certainly there would be something in common between ‘the asthmatic skeleton’ who, with a handful of horse, held up for a priceless hour the triumphant pursuit that raved upon his broken army after the bloody fight of Landen, and the man who, first with two ships and afterwards with one, clung dauntlessly to the French squadron through five long days and nights.

When in 1702 it was resolved to send another squadron to the West Indies, William was of opinion that it would not be fair to appoint Benbow again to that trying station, so soon after his return. He was admittedly the best man for the post, but it was one of peculiar difficulty and heavy responsibility. Several officers were named and consulted, but either their health or their affairs were in such disorder that they begged to be excused. ‘Upon which the King said merrily to some of his ministers, alluding to the dress and appearance of these gentlemen, “Well then, I find we must spare our beaus, and send honest Benbow.”’ When William asked him if he would go, saying that he would not take it amiss if he refused, Benbow answered with the blunt obedience that the curt King loved, ‘That he had no right to choose his

station, and that if his Majesty thought fit to send him to the East or the West Indies or anywhere else (it is possible that he specified an even hotter and more distant region) he would cheerfully execute his orders, as became him.' And so with ten ships he sailed on his last outward voyage.

Some of his captains were men of birth and breeding, men who had done good service, it may be, but who owed their positions to their powerful friends. Benbow hated such men, was possibly inclined to be unjust to them. One cannot doubt that when he sailed he had scornfully in his mind the white-handed exquisites who had refused to undertake the work that now lay before him, and was determined in a smouldering fashion to stand no nonsense from such officers under his command. It would appear that unhappily they gave him an opportunity to relieve his feelings. Campbell, certainly no enemy to Benbow, tells us, 'The Admiral was an honest rough seaman, and fancied that his command was bestowed upon him for no other reason than that he should serve his country; this induced him to treat Captain Kirby and the rest of the gentleman *a little roughly* at Jamaica, when he found them not quite so ready to obey his orders as he thought was their duty. And this it was that engaged them in the base and wicked design of putting it out of his power to engage the French, presuming that, as so many were concerned in it, they might be able to justify themselves and throw the blame upon the Admiral, and so they hoped to be rid of him. . . . But his rugged honesty baffled them. . . .' These words are significant enough. We can imagine what took place at Jamaica. Afterwards Kirby and the rest, who had done good service in the past, acted from malice rather than cowardice. They were not cowards; there have been few enough cowards in the Navy. But Benbow had treated them 'a little briskly,' and they were hot for vengeance.

There were three French squadrons in the West Indies, and Benbow was hopelessly outnumbered. But he bided his time with skill, and on August 10, 1702, made a dash for the third and smallest squadron under Du Casse. He came in touch with it near Santa Marta on the evening of the 19th. It consisted of four ships of from 60 to 70 guns, one large Dutch-built ship of from 30 to 40, a transport full of soldiers, a sloop and three small ships, one of which was a prize. Benbow's squadron, for effective purposes, was superior. He had seven ships, ranging from 70 to 48 guns, but they were much scattered when the enemy was sighted.

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Benbow at once flew the signal for a line of battle, and himself made pursuit in the *Breda* under easy sail to give time for his most distant ships to come into position.

The French were steering westward along the shore under topsails, and, as his frigates were curiously tardy in closing, Benbow brought the *Breda* up with the enemy, but still waited for the *Defiance* to lead the line. It was, however, the *Falmouth* who opened the ball. She joined battle with the Dutch ship, then the *Windsor* and the *Defiance* with the craft abreast of them, and Benbow himself engaged. One fancies him mellowed by the joy of battle, as was his way, unusually courteous and genial. But to his wrathful amazement he was to see the *Windsor* and *Defiance* stand no more than two or three broadsides before they luffed out of gunshot! Their late opponents promptly closed upon the *Breda* and 'galled her very much.' From four o'clock till dark the uneven fight continued, and then, although firing ceased, Benbow still stuck to the enemy. He decided to change his line of battle and to lead himself in the *Breda* on all tacks, with the idea of shaming the rest of his squadron into a keener performance of their duty.

At daybreak on the twentieth he found himself once more within touch of the enemy, but with only the *Ruby* in a position to support him. The rest of the English ships were three, four, and five miles astern. There was little wind, and, 'Though the *Breda* was in gunshot, the enemy was so civil as not to fire.' This appears sufficiently surprising, as the *Breda* and her consort must have been practically in their power. About two in the afternoon the sea breeze sprang up, and the enemy got into line, but made all sail away. 'The *Breda* and the *Ruby* plied them with chace guns, and kept them company all night.' One can imagine Benbow's impotent rage and shame, to see this not overbold French squadron almost in his grip, and yet to be thwarted by his own commanders.

On the twenty-first the *Ruby* was engaged by two ships at once, and the *Breda* was thrust to her rescue within point-blank range. Benbow would be in his element at last, and one of those ships he plied so warmly and handled so roughly that she was forced to tow off. The *Breda* would have followed closely to finish her work, but the *Ruby* was so shattered in masts and rigging that the Admiral was compelled to stand beside her. This engagement had lasted for almost two hours, and during that time the *Defiance* and *Windsor* had been within gunshot of the rear ship of the enemy, but neither

had fired a single shot. There can be little doubt that had Captain Walton of the *Ruby* failed in his duty, the conspiracy must have succeeded and Benbow been forced to return to Jamaica. As it was, a gale sprang up about eight o'clock, and the Admiral's hopes rose, for his ships had come up, were in good order of battle, and seemed at last disposed to fight. The French had made what sail they could away, but Benbow drove the *Breda* abreast of two of their rear ships and opened fire, as did some of his ships from astern of him. But, since the *Breda* was still practically alone, the French were able to concentrate their fire upon her, galling her rigging and dismounting two or three of her lower tier of guns. For some reason they did not see fit to press their advantage, but edged away and in two hours were out of range.

At dawn on the twenty-second the French were a mile and a half ahead of the *Breda*, but the *Greenwich* was three leagues astern, and the other ships a somewhat lesser distance, although the signal for battle had never been struck night or day. The wind changed at three o'clock, giving the enemy the weather gauge; but the stubborn Admiral, by tacking, fetched within range of their rearmost vessel, and exchanged shots with her. Our line was terribly scattered, but, says Burchett, the French seemed very uneasy, often and confusedly altering their course between the west and north. It is to be supposed that Benbow's reputation as a fighting man had got upon their nerves.

The dawn broke grey on the twenty-third, the day of hardest fight, to reveal an unchanged position. The enemy were six miles ahead of the *Breda*, and the *Windsor* and *Defiance* were four miles astern of her. At ten o'clock the French tacked with the wind E.N.E., and Benbow again hustled the *Breda* within point-blank range, and had some little hot work against sufficiently long odds. He succeeded in retaking from the enemy the small English ship, the *Anne*, that they had captured. Now he was forced to order the disabled *Ruby* to make the best of her way to Jamaica; but by eight at night the rest of the English squadron were up with him, and the enemy only two miles away. Benbow's hopes must have risen again, but when he made after the enemy only the *Falmouth* kept with the *Breda*. The rest shamefully fell astern once more. But Benbow had a poor head for figures when it was a question of counting the odds against him. He pressed forward with the one ship that would follow him, and now there began a grim night battle. The French had begun to scatter, and

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at two in the morning Benbow brought the *Breda* near enough to the sternmost ship to give her his broadside of double-headed shot from his lower tier of guns, and, from the upper tier, round and Partridge shot. This fire the Frenchman returned very briskly, and about three o'clock Benbow's right leg was shattered by a chain shot. 'He was carried below, but he presently ordered his cradle on the quarterdeck, and so continued the fight till day.'

It sounds a little thing enough, does it not, set down in bald words? And yet, thinking it over, one may wonder if indeed it was so small. It would need no trifling strength of soul, no slight grimness of resolution, to preserve a stiff, unflinching face, a cheery, unbroken voice through the long agony of that vigil; so to bear himself that the toiling, sweating men should win heart from his presence, should suspect him capable of no human weakness. And, since it could be done, it was no doubt a performance of some little value. One does not fancy that the smoke-grimed, weary seamen would fight their guns the worse for the sight of that maimed man in his cradle upon the quarterdeck, white-faced beneath his bronze, biting hard, maybe, upon the stem of his long pipe.

When at last after that long wild night the slow dawn came, the effect of the *Breda's* guns was to be seen. One of the enemy's ships of seventy guns was almost a wreck. Her mizzen mast had gone by the board, her main and fore-topsail yards were disabled, and her sides were gashed and torn by the double-headed shot. The *Falmouth* had borne herself well in that night-action, but no other English craft had stood by the flagship, and now the French plucked up heart and bore down upon the *Breda* before a strong easterly squall. The *Pendennis*, *Windsor*, *Greenwich*, and *Defiance*, who had crept up at dawn, contented themselves with giving the disabled Frenchman their broadsides, and then, to their shame, bore southward. The French clearly expected them to tack and join battle, not being used to such work on the part of English ships, and they themselves turned to the northward. But when they saw the English ships hold on, they again bore down upon the *Breda*, who lay alone with the *Falmouth* more than a gunshot to leeward. Running between the *Breda* and their own disabled ship, the French gave the flagship all the fire they could. She was quite deserted at the time, for, as Burchett says, 'the other English ships were in a hurry, and shewed as little regard to Discipline as they did to their own honour. . . .' 'Captain Fogg of the *Breda*

fired two guns at those ships, to put them in mind of their duty ; but the French, seeing the great disorder they were in, brought to and lay by their disabled ship, remanned her, and took her in tow.' It is to be presumed that they had found the *Breda*, deserted as she was, too tough a nut for their cracking. That crippled man upon her quarterdeck could still turn at bay like a wounded tiger that dies snarling and entirely reckless ; could still give heart and encouragement to his crew. But the *Breda* had lost her main-top-sail yard and her rigging was much cut about.

By ten o'clock in the morning of the twenty-fourth her damages had been repaired, and Benbow gave orders for the chase to be renewed. Which order, under the circumstances, has a certain sullen humour. The enemy were three miles to leeward, 'but our ships continued to run to an fro very confusedly.' Then at last Benbow did what one wonders that he had not done before. He called first Captain Kirby of the *Defiance*, and then the other captains, aboard, and demanded an explanation of their conduct.

I do not fancy that it was an especially pleasant meeting, that council aboard the battered flagship. Benbow would see to that. He would be in little mood for geniality. One pictures him presiding, with his shattered leg in its cradle, with his keen face grim and drawn and damp with agony, and with bitter wrath, with sheer righteous hatred, glinting from his eyes. But for these men—these gentlemen—these paltry shirkers, Du Casse, as he was supposed to write in his famous letter, would have supped ere this in the *Breda's* cabin—a prisoner !

Captain Kirby appears to have been the leader of the mutineers. He said 'that Benbow had better desist ; that the French were very strong ; and that from what was past he might guess he could make nothing of it.' This statement was not disowned by Kirby at his subsequent court-martial. The other captains agreed, and even signed a paper recommending a return to Jamaica. And this although the English had six ships in good condition as against only four of the same size, and one of those disabled, of the enemy ; no want of ammunition, and not more than eight men killed, except on the *Breda* ! Benbow, no doubt, would storm fiercely, would even have wild thoughts of continuing the chase alone ; but it is said that the officers of the *Breda* pressed him to make sail for Jamaica, lest the other captains, having become desperate, should go over to the enemy. And so, with what bitterness of heart one may only guess, Benbow consented to draw off from that squadron

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into whose very midst he had pressed, time and again, without support; whose guns and whose might he had flouted and defied and scorned through the gales and the murky darkness of five long-drawn days and nights.

At Jamaica his vengeance was swift and heavy. He had no legal power to delegate his authority to another, nevertheless he appointed Admiral Whetstone to be president of the court-martial. Fever had set in since the amputation of his leg, and he himself was in no condition to preside, in addition to the fact that he considered his personal interest to be too great. In the evidence against Kirby it transpired that the Admiral had boarded the enemy three times in person, and had received a 'large wound' in his face and another in his arm before he sustained the crippling injury to his leg. Amongst other charges, it was proved that Kirby had threatened to kill his own boatswain for repeating the Admiral's command to fire. He had very little to say for himself. He was sentenced to be shot, as was Captain Wade, who was proved to have been drunk during the whole of the engagement. Captain Constable of the *Windsor* was cashiered. Hudson of the *Pendennis* died before the trial, or he would have shared the fate of Kirby and Wade. Vincent of the *Falmouth* and Fogg of the flagship, who had signed the protest, were only temporarily suspended from duty, since the Admiral represented on their behalf that they had behaved well in the actual fight. And so was justice satisfied. It is something to remember that, as the author of 'The British Empire in America' observed, 'during the whole course of the war between England and France, never two Englishmen brought such dishonour on their country as Kirby and Wade.'

As for Benbow, he had done his work, and now he was dying. It is probably no exaggeration to say that his end was hastened by something not far short of heartbreak. According to a contemporary journalist, he wrote home to his wife 'that the loss of his limb did not trouble him half so much as the villainous treachery of his captains, which hindered him from totally destroying the French squadron.' And indeed there seems to be no doubt that the enemy's capture or destruction could have been effected if fair support had been accorded to the Admiral. This view is borne out by the account given of the affair in the 'London Gazette.' Campbell gives the following curious letter, which, on the authority

of Benbow's son-in-law, he asserts to have been sent to the Admiral by his opponent Du Casse :

SIR,—I had little hopes, on Monday last, but to have supped in your cabin; but it pleased God to order it otherwise; I am thankful for it. As for those cowardly captains who deserted you, hang them up; for, by —, they deserve it.
—Yours, Du CASSE.

No copy of this extraordinary epistle has ever been seen, and it bears upon its face all the signs of a fabrication; but possibly it represents in some measure the real feelings of the French admiral at certain moments of the action.

A robust constitution enabled Benbow to make a struggle for life. He had always been a man of most temperate habits, 'who was never seen disguised in drink.' John le Neve in his MS Obituary speaks of him as a person of great temperance and great courage. But fever, weakness, and disappointment wore him down, and he died on November 4, 1702. He was buried in the chancel of St. Andrew's Church, Kingston, where a slab of blue slate still marks his grave.

And for the rest, if any were disposed to find harsh judgment for his faults, perhaps they would do well to remember his words in the heat of action to one of his lieutenants who expressed his sorrow for the loss of his leg. 'I am sorry for it, too; but I had rather have lost them both than have seen this dishonour brought upon the English nation. But—do you hear?—if another shot should take me off, behave like brave men and fight it out.' Those words seem to me to give an epitome of his character—high-hearted and simple, formidable, direct, and brave. And when all that is possible has been said to his disparagement, that running single-handed fight of his remains a wonderful thing, a very valiant thing, a thing of which we may be proud. Perhaps, I like to fancy it, there was no bitterness in his heart, as, with dimming eyes, he watched the glory of his last sunset stain the glowing sea that he had ruled—perhaps he had only the memory of work well done against sore odds, even to the limits of his strength. And perhaps in that last hour it was also given to him to know that England, careless as she is, would not forget.

JOHN BARNETT.

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THE FLINT HEART.

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY MAN.

VERY many years ago—perhaps five thousand, perhaps more—there was a wonderful and a busy people swarming all over Dartmoor. And if you don't know where Dartmoor is, get your map of England, and you'll find it in Devonshire. Some day, if you happen to be lucky, you may go there for a holiday, and then I can promise you a mighty treat. But you won't see exactly what I'm going to show you now, because the folk who begin this story have all vanished and their houses have nearly all vanished too.

They lived in the New Stone Age, and if you think that sounds dull, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. It was the liveliest age before history. In fact, nobody ever had a dull moment.

Both the New Stoners and the Old Stoners too have long since rolled away; but when you go to Dartmoor you will see what they left behind them in the shape of hundreds and hundreds of other stones. Some stand in circles, and some stand in rows, and some stand all alone; but you will mark in a moment, if your eyes are worth calling eyes, that these stones never happened by chance. They are very different from the tors and 'clitters' and rock masses which are flung about all over Dartmoor, as if the giants had been having a battle there and tried to find who could fling the biggest lump at his enemy.

If you had seen the Moor when the New Stoners lived on it, you would have noticed strange little villages of very quaint-looking, round huts, like giant beehives in clusters. And about them stood walls, and little folds for cattle, and circles of stones dotted in rings—where perhaps the Houses of Parliament met to fling more stones at each other. You will see also long rows of stones stretching far away to lonely spots on distant tors, where the great warriors and chiefs were buried.

You know these people had never heard of metal, and so used

people believe in the middle-aged times, and the young people believe in the present times, especially if they happen to be holiday times. But hardly anybody believes in the future times. Yet, for my part, though I sha'n't be there, I believe in them with all my might, and feel sure that they will be more splendid than any times we have ever had yet. And I hope you will live long enough to see them arrive. As for the New Stoners, the Bronze men ran into them while they were still whining about the good old times; and then they very soon forgot what it felt like to have nothing but stone to work with, and wondered how anybody had ever managed to get on without metal.

The arrival of the first pin was one of the greatest events in Dartmoor history. It came in a ship to Plymouth, and a great chief had it as a present on his jubilee. But the great chief's wife very soon got it out of him, and the first New Stoner to be pricked with it was the great chief's wife's boy baby, while he was being logged in his wolf-skin cradle by the great chief's wife's boy baby's nurse.

But from that pin to an arrow-head was but a matter of a moment; and then followed daggers and helmets and targets, and hairpins and safety-pins and hat-pins, and buttons and fire-irons and frying-pans, and toasting forks and ploughshares and pruning-hooks, and, in fact, all the blessings of civilisation that could be hoped for until those two noisy things, printing and gun-powder, were invented.

AND NOW,

after all this talk, the story begins.

There was once a New Stoner whose name was Brokotoctotick, and there was another New Stoner whose name was merely Fum. Brokotoctotick—we will call him Brok for short, as most people did behind his back, though he wouldn't have liked it—was a fighter; and Fum was a man of mystery. They belonged to a tribe which lived in a village called Grimspond, under Hameldon in the middle of Dartmoor; and the tribe was a very important one, and Brok and Fum were the most important people in it. Brokotoctotick—whose name sounds to me more like a cuckoo clock out of order than anything sensible—was the head-man of the clan, and a warrior of high renown, and Fum was a good many things rolled into one. He was the Lord Chancellor to begin with, and he was the Lord Chief Justice too. He was also the only doctor in the tribe; and, as if all that were not enough,

during his spare time he made poetry and manufactured charms to keep off the Bugaboos. There are no Bugaboos on Dartmoor now, but there were once. They vanished away with the Stone Age. And Fum knew all about the Bugaboos, and could furnish charms for catching them or keeping them off. The brave New Stoners liked one charm; the timid New Stoners preferred the other. Fum was paid in sheep and cattle for his charms. Probably the sheep weren't quite as good as our prize 'Dartmoors' nowadays; but mutton was mutton even then, and the mystery man loved nothing better than a good chump chop. Therefore, when people wanted his charms, they always brought a live sheep; and if they wanted something extra strong they had to bring two. Then Fum would make the charm, and often, if he was feeling cheerful and amiable, he would keep the customer and recite one of his finest pieces of poetry.

These sagas, or sayings, of Fum's were very well thought of in those days, and if the New Stoners had known how to make books, he might have done well and sold his poems, nicely bound in wolf-skin or bear-skin, for at least a shoulder of lamb a copy; but it was a dark, prehistoric age, and the great idea had not struck him. He merely learned his own poems by heart and recited them for his friends; which, after all, is the best way to publish, if your friends are patient and kind.

Some poets before Fum's time lifted up their voices and sang. And the first New Stoner who sang made everybody jump, I can tell you. In fact, he was so amazing, and so wonderful, and so unlike everybody else, that they took him out to the top of a high hill and chopped his head off with a flint axe—just for a warning to other people not to be too clever. But the second poet who found that he could sing was cleverer still, and he told the people exactly what he was going to do before he began. So they were ready for him and didn't jump, and thought it was beautiful. In fact, they made a tremendous fuss about him and bragged about him to other New Stone tribes who had no singers. Which shows that you may do anything new in reason, so long as you don't make people jump too much, but give them fair warning.

And this is the end of the first chapter. There is no special reason why it should be; but it looks about long enough, and I like to keep my chapters fairly short, because the long ones get puffed up and sneer at the little ones, though often the little ones are much the best and the long ones are frightfully dull. Of

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course, in this book about the wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten Flint Heart there must not be a single dull chapter, if I can help it. And if you find one, please write to me and tell me which it is. Then I shall look after it, and may even drop it out of the story altogether, if it does not try to improve and brighten itself up.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAKING OF THE CHARM.

FUM had his charm shop some way from the village, and often hid himself there for days at a time; because it is no good being a man of mystery if you don't keep it up and do mysterious things. So he built a special hut down by the river Dart at a place called Postbridge, and he went there twice a week to make charms. And if there were a lot of charms on hand and not much for the Lord Chancellor to do, and not much for the doctor, he went down to Postbridge three times a week and hid there, and nobody was admitted except on business. All his charms were made of flint, for remember always that this was the Stone Age.

Fum got these flints from a long way off, and then, with an immense deal of time and patience, he hammered away at them and chipped and chipped and chipped them into arrow-heads and spear-heads and other useful and necessary things. But the charms that he made fetched more mutton than the other articles, and were really easier to make too; though Fum never told anybody that. On the contrary, he pretended that they were fearfully difficult, and declared that he could only make them at certain times when the Thunder Spirit was with him. People thought this was mystery; but as a matter of fact it was merely business.

Fum sat one day chipping a flint brooch for Mrs. Brokotockotick, the chief's wife, when there came to him a young warrior of the clan called Phuttphutt. He was a tall strong New Stoner, with black hair, and he wore a brown bear-skin round his body and a look of great discontent upon his face. He had nothing else on at all, except one heron's feather stuck behind his ear. This was not a pen, but an order or distinction—the order of the G.H.F. or Grey Heron Feather. It was a military order, and could only be won by a soldier who had slain fifty enemies with his own hand.

'Good morning, Fum,' said Phuttphutt. 'I know there is no admittance here except on business; but I have come on business. I want an expensive and important charm.'

'Sit down and tell me about it,' answered Fum. He dropped his tools, pushed away the brooch for Mrs. Brok—it was not going on too well, and promised to be one of his failures—got up from his work-table, at an old tree-stump, and stretched his arms and legs.

'The position is this,' began Phutt. We can leave out the rest of his name except on State occasions. 'I want to know why Brokotoctotick is the chieftain of this tribe. I want to know why he should lord it over a man like me. I want to know if I shouldn't make quite as good a chief as he does; and I also want to know how to set about becoming chief in his place.'

'You want to know a lot of things,' answered Fum.

'I do,' admitted Phutt. 'Take an instance. You remember that in the great battle with the tribe on the other side of the river I killed fourteen men and wounded ten more.'

'You did,' admitted Fum, 'and I proposed and seconded the vote of thanks in the House of Parliament.'

'Well, you will recollect that among other rare spoils I took with my own hands, when the survivors of the beaten tribe ran for their lives, there were a white mole-skin war-waistcoat from the body of the chief and a silver fox-skin petticoat, the property of the chief's wife?'

'Quite true.'

'And they were the most wonderful and beautiful things in the whole lodge, and naturally I thought I ought to have the war-waistcoat and my wife ought to have the silver-fox petticoat. Yet who wear them now?'

'Mr. and Mrs. Brokotoctotick wear them at garden-parties,' answered Fum.

'Exactly. He took them away. He said they were his by right. He grabbed all the best things and left me all the second best. And what I want to know is, why?'

'Because he was the stronger.'

'Not at all,' said Phutt. 'I am stronger, I am younger, and my muscles are bigger. I am a G.H.F. as well as him. In the last battle he only killed seven men and a boy. That shows I'm a better warrior than Brok.'

'A better warrior, perhaps; but not a stronger man. Your

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grammar is worse than his too. He's harder-hearted; he's got a more powerful will. He was born to rule; you were not. If you want to be at the top of the tree in this tribe you've got to be as hard-hearted as a wolf. That's where he beats you—you're too soft, my boy.'

Phutt thought about this.

'You're right,' he said. 'Well, then, you know the sort of charm I must have. Give me a hard heart, Fum—the harder the better.'

The man of mystery was a good deal older than Phutt, and his own heart was not very hard.

'It can be done,' he answered; 'but think twice.'

'If it can be done, do it,' said Phutt.

Fum shook his head.

'If this is done, there will be no more peace in the tribe till you have become chief.'

'It won't take long if your charm is strong enough,' answered Phutt, G.H.F. 'You know how hard Brok's heart is; then you've only got to make mine twice as hard and——'

'But there's another side,' explained Fum. 'It's true you'll be chief, but you'll very likely lose the affection of the tribe. Brok is the head-man, but he isn't the favourite man. They don't shout for him as they do for you. The children don't weave garlands of foxgloves for him as they do for you. The women don't make him slippers or necklaces of wolf's teeth, as they do for you.'

'Bah!' cried Phutt, 'who wants the children bothering round him, or necklaces of wolf's teeth? Give me my white mole-skin war-waistcoat and unlimited power.'

Still Fum, who was a great lover of peace, as all the best mystery men are, tried to change Phutt's mind; but the young warrior was firm. Then the charm-maker thought of a way out of the difficulty.

'As a matter of fact, such a thing as you want would be frightfully expensive,' he said.

'How much?' asked Phutt.

'Oh, far more than you could pay.'

'How much?' repeated Phutt.

'It would take the chief himself to pay it, I assure you.'

'How much?'

Thus driven into a corner, Fum had to answer, and he made the price ridiculously high.

'Thirty-two sheep and thirty-two lambs,' he said.

Then he heaved a sigh of relief, for he felt pretty sure that Phutt would not, even if he could, pay such a price as that.

The other considered, and Fum tried yet again to influence him.

'What's the use?' he continued. 'What's the good of a hard heart, even if you've got one? A soft heart wins much pleasanter things; and to be head of a tribe like this is not at all a pleasant thing. Look here, I'll give you a very fine charm for catching white moles, and then you'll soon be able to get your wife to make you a white mole-skin war-waistcoat of your own. And it will be a new one, and no doubt fit you much better than the other.'

But Phutt was not listening.

'This charm will make my heart just twice as hard as Brok's?' he asked.

'It will; and so you'll have just twice as many difficulties as Brok.'

'And I shall be just twice as well able to tackle them.'

Then Phutt, who was no hand at figures, asked Fum to show him exactly how many thirty-two sheep and thirty-two lambs would be, and Fum arranged thirty-two big lumps of flint for the sheep and thirty-two little ones for the lambs.

'I'll call again the day after to-morrow,' said Phutt, 'and then I'll see if I can pay you.'

He put all the stones into a leather bag and went off to his flock of sheep, which lived outside the main great wall of Grimpound village, and were driven inside at night and tended by a shepherd. Then he made the shepherd drive the sheep in a row before him, and he put down a flint stone as each passed. He found when they had all gone by that there were no flints left. Therefore his total flock just sufficed to pay Fum for the promised charm.

Phutt was well pleased at this and, according to his promise, visited Fum again on the following day.

'I find,' said he, 'that I can pay for the charm, so you may set about it. Here are your flint stones back. I have got exactly as many sheep and lambs as there are stones in this bag.'

'Remember,' said Fum, 'you will be left without any at all.'

But Phutt only laughed at that.

'You're not such a very clever man as you make out, it seems

to me,' he answered. 'Why, when my heart turns hard, I shall jolly soon have as many sheep as I want, and as many cows too, not to mention as many of everything else.'

'True,' admitted Fum. 'I had overlooked that.'

'When shall I have the charm?' asked Phutt.

'As soon as I can make it. In a month, if all goes well. But flint is an unkind stone—you never know if it will split right or wrong.'

'In a month, then, I shall return,' said Phutt; 'and on the day the charm is handed to me, my sheep shall be driven into your fold.'

Off he went, and Fum took a stone there and then and began to give it a few rough preliminary blows. But, at the very first stroke, a remarkable thing happened. The stone broke into three pieces, and the middle piece was the exact shape of a bright black heart with a hole in it. Of course, Fum couldn't believe his eyes. But there was no mistaking the object. He had earned thirty-two sheep and thirty-two lambs at a single blow! Still he knew right well that such a thing had not happened by chance. He was aware that the great and powerful and much-to-be-dreaded Spirit of the Thunder had helped him.

Now the Spirit of the Thunder is as mischievous as and far more wicked than a schoolboy. He had played Fum some strange tricks before, and on this occasion, greatly though he loved a chop, or a nice saddle of mutton with rowanberry jelly, yet the mystery man would gladly have given up his bargain and thrown the Flint Heart into the river rather than hand it to Phutt. But he dared not do any such thing, because he knew that the Thunder Spirit had helped him; and to have any difference with the Spirit of the Thunder was quite out of the question in New Stone days. The Spirit of the Thunder talks Death, and every word of his language is strong enough to burn up even a mystery man. Fum remembered the last mystery man and what became of him only too well. He was called Sminth, and he quarrelled with the Spirit of the Thunder; and when the Spirit answered back, all that was left of Sminth was a little bit of charcoal about half the size of a cocoanut. You see, the Spirit of the Thunder always will have the last word.

So, taking one thing with another, Fum felt that the responsibility must rest with the Spirit of the Thunder, and he went to his door and called after Phutt.

The whole making of the Heart had occupied but one minute and thirty seconds, and Phutt was still within earshot. Therefore he heard and returned.

His surprise at seeing the Heart was very considerable, and he felt suspicious and inclined to doubt if Fum had fairly earned his flock.

'You may take it or leave it, and I wish you'd leave it,' said the mystery man. '*I don't want you to have it. And as sure as my name is Fum, you'll repent it.*'

But Phutt thought not. He and Fum took hands and walked round and round the Flint Heart, and Fum lifted up his light baritone voice and sang a song, and Phutt, who was a tenor, replied, also in verse; because a New Stoner's bargain was always ratified in that manner. These are their words, done into modern English, and, I regret to say, quite spoiled in translation.

Fum began :

'By the Spirit of the Thunder, do not take this direful charm,
So deadly and so dangerous, so full of hidden harm.
Oh, change your mind; be good and kind
As you were wont to be;
Your family, dear Phutt, I know,
Vill much regret to see
A husband and a father dear
Abandon love and rule by fear.'

But Phutt would not take the hint, though Fum sang beautifully, and there were tears in his voice and even in his eyes as he danced round and round.

The young warrior shook his head, cleared his throat, and answered thus :

'This black flint heart I welcome; it shall hang upon my vest;
For Stoners New a hard flint heart, believe me, Fum, is best.
A chip of night,
A charm of might
To startle and surprise,
To frighten men and women all
And make them rub their eyes.
For Phutt shall ever reign by fear—
Oh, Spirit of the Thunder, hear!'

They danced round eighteen times, which the occasion demanded, because eighteen is the magical New Stone number. Then they stopped and Fum dried his eyes, and Phutt, stringing the Flint Heart on a leather bootlace, hung it round his neck and went to look at himself in a pool of water. But he didn't see

himself reflected there. Instead he was rather alarmed to observe gazing up at him a dark, terrible, and wonderful phantom. This phantom was not exactly ugly—indeed, some people might have admired it; but it was solemn and strange, and its eyes were the copper-colour of the sky before storm, and its hair was the lightning, twisted, tangled, tormented over its forehead into a fury of fire. You never saw such lovely hair—all rose and blue and dazzling flame-colour.

Phutt started back and looked aloft, and saw in the sky the amazing and terrific shape that had thrown this picture into the pool.

Fum was not so much astonished, because he had met the wonder before.

‘Look!’ he said, ‘the Spirit of the Thunder! Hark! It speaks!’

Out of the darkened zenith, where the dazzling, diamond-bright arch of the Spirit’s hair made the daylight wan, there came a peal of many thunders. The awful music rang and rattled and roared; and the rocky hills caught the noise and flung it backward and forward among them.

‘Now you’ve done it!’ said Fum; ‘I wouldn’t be you for all the sheep on Dartmoor.’

But Phutt was not alarmed after the first shock. He looked up quite calmly and smiled and nodded.

‘That’s all right, Thunder Spirit,’ he said. ‘We’re not deaf!’

Of course, to be rude to the Thunder Spirit may have been rather brave of Phutt, but it was also rather foolish, and Fum felt exceedingly uneasy. He feared, indeed, that this rash young New Stoner would instantly be swept away by a flash of lightning for his pains. The Thunder Spirit, however, did nothing. He had a true sense of humour, and the idea of this human atom talking to him so cheekily much amused the great being. So he broke out into a rattling peal of laughter that shook Dartmoor to the roots and knocked the upper storeys off seven of the highest tors; then he gathered his garment of sooty cloud about him and drew the cowl of the rain over his glittering hair and swept away in tempest and darkness.

After he had gone the sky turned blue again; but it was not nearly so blue as Fum.

The man of mystery went back into his workshop and picked

up Mrs. Brok's brooch; while Phutt, eager to test the power of the Flint Heart, made all haste to return to Grimspound.

On the way he met three different beasts, and considered that this accident was a good omen.

The first was a deer, and he slew it and said, ' Good, I shall have the swiftness of the deer.'

The second was a bear, and he slew it and said, ' Better, I shall have the strength of a bear.'

The third was a fox, and he slew it and said, ' Best, I shall have the cunning of the fox! '

And so he came back to Grimspound.

CHAPTER III.

THE REIGN OF PHUTT.

At the great entrance in the main wall that ran all round the village three children were sitting in the road playing at knuckle-bones. Their hair was black and their eyes were black, and their mouths were purple because they had all been eating whortleberries. They wore no clothes, and their little bodies were hard and strong and their little muscles were coming on well. They laughed at Phutt as he approached, and asked him to come and join the game; but they didn't laugh twice, because Phutt told them to get out of his way, and before they had time to do so he kicked them out. The infant New Stoners flew in one direction; their knuckle-bones flew in another. A woman standing by thought that she must be in a nightmare to see such a horrid sight; but after she had pulled her pigtail to prove that she was awake, she ran screaming down the high street of Grimspound and let it be known that the great warrior Phutt had gone mad and was killing the children at the gate. Then the father of the children hastened out and met Phutt, and used some rather strong New Stone words, such as ' Spzfutz ' and ' Bbjkfjiuk ' and ' Bubblexg,' which we have lost the art of pronouncing (if it can be considered a loss); and when he had done Phutt took his flint-headed axe and hit the father of the family on the head with it, so that he fell down and died upon the spot. There was really no arguing with Phutt now.

Of course, during those days people were naturally a little more prickly than they are in the twentieth century; but even

for a man who had missed going to school, Phutt went too far. To question his judgment meant a broken jaw or a dig in the pit of the stomach that would have settled anybody but a Stone Man on the spot; while those unwise members of the clan who openly differed from him found their heads cloven in twain before they could take their hats off.

Mrs. Phutt very properly sided with her husband. She felt that it was only right and respectable to sink or swim with him, whatever he did; but the thirteen little Phutts, as children will, refused to hide their private opinions of the change that had come over daddy. They howled if he looked at them, and ran for protection to the great, lean, wolfish sheep-dogs that guarded the folds by night.

But after Phutt had talked to the sheep-dogs even they went in fear, and the moment they heard his voice they put their tails between their legs and bent their heads and bristled and growled and showed their teeth and skulked with glimmering red-hot eyes away.

Then, after three days of this sort of thing, the tribe sent a deputation to their chief begging that the head of Phutt might be taken off as quickly as possible in the interests of peace and progress. The man of mystery, Fum himself, composed the petition; but even he trembled a little when he delivered it before Brok, because nobody had been more surprised than Fum to find what a frightfully strong charm it was that he had managed to make for Phutt.

The big men of the tribe—all that were left, for Phutt had killed a good many—went in a procession to Brokotoctotick and pushed Fum forward. They had chosen an afternoon when Phutt was from home killing bears; and Fum rather gabbled the petition, for, like everybody else, he was in a terrible fright that Phutt would return before any plans could be made.

'May it please your gracious Goodness, we, the loyal and faithful people of the loyal and faithful city of Grimspond, do implore and beseech and beg and entreat your genial Mightiness to restrain, sit on, squash, squelch, and otherwise smash that high and mighty and far-too-much-puffed-up person known as Phutt for shortness, whose real name is Phuttputt, from——'

'Take breath,' said the chief. 'There is no hurry, my dear Fum. I am disengaged until supper-time. These legal forms of speech are exceptionally trying to a stout and short-winded gentleman like yourself, because of the lack of stops.'

Which shows what a wise, considerate, and reasonable person Brok was for those days.

Fum thanked him, and the rest applauded with their eyes nervously turned to the gate. But Phutt was not yet in sight.

'We therefore beg, implore, beseech, and also pray that it may please your cheerful and kind-hearted Amiability to stand between us and the awful severity of Phutt, and we may add that he has destroyed many of your Kingship's subjects and fighting men and ——'

'He's coming, he's coming!' cried several of the older warriors. They were very ancient, and their hair was white, and their nerves were not what they had been. Now their knees knocked together, and they exhibited all the worst signs of funk.

'The sooner he comes the better,' said Brok. 'What I hear annoys me very much. It is quite wrong, and not at all nice of him. Are there not plenty of our enemies to kill, if he wants to kill people? I don't like this loose way we are falling into of killing one another without a proper reason. It isn't gentlemanly, and it isn't a good example for the children. What's more, I won't have it. Tell him to come here and stand in front of me.'

'I regret to say that he refuses to be ordered,' explained Fum. 'Only yesterday two courageous people tactfully hinted to Phutt that his conduct threw him open to criticism. His reply was to cut them both in half across the middle—like two packs of cards.'

'Then it is time for me to act,' declared the chief. 'Phutt must be cautioned, and if it happens again he shall be punished.'

The great Brok rose off his granite throne, hitched his robes about him, and sent a boy for his crown. The robes were made of black bear-skins, dotted with white rabbits' tails; and nobody but Brok might wear this quaint and pleasing raiment under pain of death, because it was the recognised garment of the chief. Brok's crown was made of kingfishers' feathers, and it gave him quite a stylish look, though he wore it rather farther on the back of his head than crowns are worn now. That, however, is a matter of taste, which did not detract from Brok's regal appearance in the eyes of his subjects.

As Phutt wouldn't come to him, Brok, with true philosophy, sent for his Chair of State and went to Phutt. Four New Stoners

carried the chair, and the entire population of men, women, children, dogs, and perambulators came behind.

The bold Phutt stood at his door eating a piece of cake for his tea. Close at hand Mrs. Phutt was skinning the bear which her husband had brought home on his shoulders.

'Good afternoon, Phutt,' said Brok.

'Afternoon,' said Phutt, with his mouth full.

'You're having your tea, I observe,' said Brok very politely.

'You observe right,' answered Phutt.

'Does it occur to you that a good many other brave men would also be having their teas at this moment if you had not slain them?' asked the chief.

'Pooh! Don't be sentimental!' answered Phutt.

Then he went on with his cake.

Brok took off his crown and scratched his head. It was a natural, if not a kingly, action. The silence was almost painful. You could have heard anybody wink.

'Am I your chief, or am I not?' asked Brok calmly.

'You are not,' answered Phutt.

'Then you stand convicted of treason to the throne,' replied Brok; 'and you know what the punishment for *that* is.'

Brok began to get angry, for the scorn and insolence in Phutt's eye was hard to bear.

'Who took my white mole-skin war-waistcoat and silver-fox petticoat?' asked Phutt passionately.

He had finished his tea, and his fingers were playing with the edge of his terrible flint axe.

'They were not yours,' answered Brok. 'The spoils of a slain chief belong to the victorious chief and nobody else. As a matter of fact, I may tell you that the moth has got into the war-waistcoat rather badly.'

'That is neither here nor there,' answered Phutt. 'What I say is that I deny your right to the chieftainship of this clan; and, in fact, I claim it for myself.'

'Perhaps you'll tell me why,' suggested Brok.

'Because I'm stronger and bigger and younger and a better manager,' said Phutt.

'You may be,' answered Brok, 'though I'm not prepared to admit all that. But, as I am chief, and these gentlemen and ladies are perfectly satisfied with the way I and my wife manage things, it ill becomes you to talk this nonsense. You are in a minority of one.'

'So be it,' returned Phutt. 'Then who will join the minority?'

None answered, and the intrepid Phutt moistened his hands and swung his battle-axe.

'If you won't all join the minority, then you shall all join the majority!' he cried, and with this dreadful threat he shouted to the Spirit of the Thunder to lend him a hand, and boldly attacked the entire clan! His first awful blow laid Brokotoctotick dead at his feet; and the Thunder Spirit, though he did not actually take sides with Phutt and kill anybody, yet rattled and roared a good deal and made it pretty clear that he was in favour of a change.

So the rest of the braves yielded without more unpleasantness, because their wives implored them to do so for the sake of the children, and Phutt promised them all a little present on the occasion of his next birthday. He immediately put on the bear-skin and rabbit-tails and the kingfisher crown, and everybody bowed down and asked what his first order as chief was going to be.

Then he said: 'Take Brok and build a huge and solemn funeral pyre and burn him with all proper respect on the top of it. As for his wife and family, they may choose whether they will be burnt with him or go on living. I want them to please themselves. For the rest, everything that was Brok's is, of course, mine; and after we have given him a splendid funeral and Fum has sung a funeral song, to last over three days, then I shall ascend the granite throne and we will rejoice for a month, and eat and drink day and night until we nearly burst ourselves. And after that we shall want some hard work and exercise, so I shall quarrel with another clan and go to war with it.'

The businesslike way in which Phutt made all these arrangements impressed everybody.

He seemed to calm down again after poor Brok was burnt, and he insisted on a magnificent grave being built for the late chief's ashes; but it was put up miles and miles away from Grimpound; because, if there is one thing a New Stoner is horribly frightened of, it is a ghost; so when anybody had the misfortune to die suddenly—as generally happened—he was taken far away to be buried or burnt, in order that his ghost might get lost in the middle of the Moor and not by any evil chance find the way back to his old home.

So Phutt reigned in place of Brok; and I am not going to tell you any of the things that he did, because they were exceedingly horrid as a rule. He won all his battles and always had his own way, and the people hated the ground he walked on, and did everything he told them instantly, because he never spoke twice. He defeated all the neighbouring tribes, and those he didn't kill he took for slaves. Poor Mrs. Phutt couldn't stand it, so she died. She was a nice sensible woman, but not equal to the glory of being a chief's wife. In fact, the grandeur killed her, and also the sorrow of knowing what people really thought of Phutt behind his enormous back. But he didn't care. He didn't even go into mourning. He married twenty-seven more wives and bullied them all. Among other things that he did was to destroy all the Bugaboos but one, which he kept on a chain to frighten the children. He also made several new roads, and invented a new chimney that prevented the huts of his lodge from being full of smoke when the wind was in the west—which it generally was. And he caused his tribe to become the fiercest and most cruel and most powerful tribe on Dartmoor. And whenever he had a birthday, which was about once a fortnight, he made the people set up a huge stone in his honour. And many of these stones are still standing on Dartmoor, so you will see them when you go there.

Yet, despite the fact that he had made them so strong and terrible; despite the fact that everybody had sheep and cattle and skins and luxuries; despite the fact that he was the first New Stoner who broke soil and planted seed in it; despite the fact that he was the first New Stoner to invent a sling and hurl stones at the enemy; despite the fact that he patented a splendid trap for wolves, and arranged an Empire Day, and made the little New Stoners all walk two and two singing about the size of the dominions of Phutt and the blessing of living under Phutt, and the importance of binding the outlying districts to the main camp, and so forth—despite all these clever ideas, nobody liked him, because he ruled entirely by fear. And to be always frightened is a bad thing and gets on people's nerves after a time. And they never, never really care for the person who treats them so, however great and grand and clever he may be.

Fum had always to be making poetry in his old age, and it bored him a good deal sometimes; but with practice even

Empire Day poetry came pretty easily to him; which was lucky, for he had to invent thousands of poems on that subject.

But, despite all his splendour, Phutt was a cloudy and a careworn man. He looked back sometimes to the days when he had a soft heart, yet I don't honestly think that he ever wanted to go back. At any rate, he stuck tight to his terrible charm, and when he began to grow old he decided that no future chief of his clan could ever get on without it. So he made Fum promise to hand the Flint Heart to a certain young warrior—his own grandson, in fact—who was to succeed him.

And Fum promised, but he did not keep his word. He was, of course, frightfully old himself now, and would have been dead and buried ages before but for the fact of being a mystery man. A mystery man cannot die under two hundred years, and if he is careful and doesn't go out at night and only eats rice-pudding and mutton-chops, he may live to be five hundred. At any rate, Fum told a lie, and I am the last to excuse him for that. Instead of handing the Flint Heart to the new chief when Phutt closed his eyes and passed away, he buried it with Phutt; because, you see, he knew only too well what it meant, and he felt that the tribe had now reached a point when it could get on without quite such a harsh and stern chieftain to lead it.

“Kind hearts are more than coronets,” said Fum to himself—quoting Tennyson, funnily enough. ‘Anyway, I’ll take what risk there is and bury the charm with him. And if the Thunder Spirit makes a fuss and burns me up—well, really I don’t much mind. I’ve lived a very interesting life, and I shall escape having to write any more Empire poetry. In fact, nothing is so bad but that it might be worse.’

So after they had burnt Phutt—for he decided before he died that he would be burnt and then buried—Fum dropped the Flint Heart privately into his ashes. And Phutt slept under the heather, and the finest thing in cairns that you can well imagine was erected over him. And everybody hoped with all their might that Phutt’s ghost would keep quiet and not come fluttering round Grimspound afterwards on moonshiny nights.

And the Thunder Spirit did nothing, for he was busy somewhere else at the critical moment; so Fum had to compose more Empire poetry after all. But his *magnum opus*, or masterpiece, which would have been the ‘Saga of Phutt,’ in

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three hundred and seventy verses, he did not live to finish. He had learned and committed to his amazing memory two hundred and fourteen verses when there came a dreadful and fatal incursion of a tribe from Cosdon Beacon, on the north side of Dartmoor. They fell upon Grimspound by night, and because the new chief chanced to be an intelligent New Stoner, who didn't like bloodshed, and believed that it was better far to rule by love than fear, and was, in fact, several thousand years ahead of his time, therefore he and his folk had to pay the usual penalty of being so much wiser than everybody else. In fact, they all perished and Grimspound ran with streams of gore, and the scene was such that I hate even to think of it, and won't write a word more about it. Then the conquering tribe started their Empire Day, and made their tinkling rhymes; and in their turn, after many years, gave place to other and stronger people, according to the way of things that changes never.

And now we drop the curtain for a moment, and alter the scenery a little and give the Moor time to rest and recover from all those fearful troubles that Grimspound has seen. The first act of the story of the Flint Heart is ended, and, since there is an interval of five thousand years between the first act and the second, there ought to be plenty of time for you to have a sponge-cake and a glass of ginger-beer, if not a whole Christmas dinner, before we go on again.

CHAPTER IV.

MERRIPIT FARM.

A PLACE like Dartmoor doesn't change in a hurry, but thousands and thousands of years leave a mark even there; and now you will find, after all this time has passed, that it looks rather different. The village of Grimspound is deserted; the beehive roofs are gone and only the stones remain. The men and women and children, the dogs and cattle and fierce beasts, have all vanished. The walls of the city are broken and shattered. The stream that ran through the midst of it has nearly dried up, and heather and brake-fern, whortleberries and rushes, sedges and grass fill the homes of the New Stoners. Over the mighty cairn where Phutt was buried on Fur Tor grows a great mound of gorse, and, as you would expect, it is

the toughest and prickliest gorse on the whole of Dartmoor; because its roots are down in the dust of that tough and prickly hero.

And now I'll surprise you. Though all these thousands and thousands of years have passed, two of the principal characters in this story are still as lively as ever. One is the Thunder Spirit, who roars and rattles about on Dartmoor just as he used to do in the good old New Stone days; and the other is the Flint Heart. You see the Heart was buried with Phutt, to keep it out of mischief, and it has kept out of mischief ever since; but unluckily it has not turned into dust, as Phutt did. In fact, if you should ask it how it is, it might answer 'Doing quite nicely, thank you, and thoroughly rested and perfectly ready to begin business at once!'

And now, if you look round, you will find that a new order of things has begun on Dartmoor. In the low places, or snug spots sheltered under the hills and beside the sparkling rivers, many a house, such as you are accustomed to see, has sprung up. There are farms and cottages, and even the pigs and cows have much better dwellings than the New Stoners were wont to live in.

One of these houses is called Merripit Farm, and it lies in the great valley under Merripit Hill, a few miles from poor old ruined Grimpound. There are a good many other farms in this valley; but long before men found the place the pixies discovered it.

Pixies, of course, are the same as fairies, and their first cousins are the brownies and the elves, and the kobolds and the trolls, and the fays and the sylphs, and the sprites and the gnomes; and their second cousins are the bogies and the bogles, the flibbertigibbitts and the deevs, the urchins and the dwarfs, and the dwerfers and the pigwidgeons and the Pucks, and the Will-o'-the-wisps and the Jack-o'-lanterns and the Jacky-toads and the imps; and their water-cousins are the Nereids and mer-men and mer-girls and mer-boys, and the naiads and the kelpies and the nixies; and their third cousins—twenty times removed, I am glad to say—are the spooks and the banshees, and the goblins and the hobgoblins, and the hobble-goblins and the hobblebobble-goblins, and the wraiths and the wishtnesses, and the cacodemons and the furies, and the harpies and the succubus and the succuba, and the fiends of the air and

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the earth and the water, and the vampires and the ghouls, and the afrits and ogres and ogresses. And if you don't believe in these folk, I can only say that you are making a mistake and you'll live to find it out sooner or later. All the very best people, including Mr. Stead and Sir Oliver Lodge, believe in spooks, if they don't believe in the other things; and it seems to me both unkind and silly to make such a fuss about the spooks and write whole books about them and take no notice of all the others. As for me, I know Dartmoor pretty well, and I believe in everything that happens there. I have seen a Jack-o'-lantern with my own eyes, and I can't say more than that. And not to believe in Devonshire pixies—well, you might just as well not believe in Devonshire cream or Devonshire mud, or any other of the fine things that belong to Devonshire. And, besides all these arguments to prove that there are such things, this story will be full of pixies in a moment; so that's proof positive and an end of the matter. And the boy or girl who still holds out, and says that he or she does not believe in them, had better be sent to bed at once; and if he doesn't get his nose pinched blue before the morning, or if she doesn't find her hair in a proper tangle when the time comes for combing it to-morrow, I shall be a good deal surprised.

But now we must go to Merripit Farm; and the first thing you'll see there is a rough, ridiculous dog without a tail and with his hair all down over his blue eyes. He is an old English sheep-dog, and he looks as much like a monkey as a dog. But he means well, and he has brains in his head and knows a good many things you don't and never will, and can do a good many things you can't and never can. And he believes in the pixies with all his might, and would no more give up believing in them than he would give up a bone if he had the luck to find one.

Here comes his master—a very big man, you see—with a red neck and pale hair, and a fat, clean-shaved, good-natured face. He is called Billy Jago, and his wife is called Sally Jago, and his children are called John and Mary and Teddy and Frank and Charles and Sarah and Jane and Unity; and his baby is called Dicky, and his dog is called Ship.

John and Mary and Sarah and Jane are very brown, and their eyes are brown, too, like their mother's; and Charles and Teddy and Frank and Unity are fair, with yellow hair and grey eyes, like their father's; and the baby, Dicky, has struck out

a new idea of his own, and his eyes are as blue as the sky in August and his hair is as red as the brake-fern when winter comes. You see them all looking rather smart, because it is Sunday, and they have got their best clothes on. John is eighteen and quite grown up, so his clothes are not interesting; but Mary has on a plum-coloured dress with a red bow in her hair and a clean pinafore; and Teddy wears a knickerbocker suit made out of green cloth, with a red tie; and Frank is dressed just the same. Charles has a grey suit with a yellow tie and a Scotch cap, which is his great joy; and Sarah and Jane are clothed alike in dark-blue dresses with light-blue bows and white stockings; and as for Unity, she has Sarah's last year's dress cut down, so she doesn't really count yet. Besides she is only five, and nobody gets very exciting till they grow rather older than that. Of course I don't mean by this that it is not a very right and proper thing to be five. All the most successful and pleasant people in the world have been five once, and even three, and two. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being five; but if that is the case with you, you must choose your friends either among other people of five or among those who are over fifty. And if you feel a doubt about the age you have only to ask, and if the people you want to know also wish to know you, they will instantly declare they are five or fifty, as the case may be.

The Sunday dinner at Merripit Farm was a very good one indeed. It began with a goose, went on to a plum-pudding and mince-pies, and finished up with ten oranges and ten sticks of the best milk chocolate and ten little puppets made to represent Father Christmas. Their heads screwed off quite simply, and they were full of mixed sweets.

You will naturally be rather surprised at such a noble meal. But I must tell you that it was Christmas Day as well as Sunday, and the young Jagos had been expecting this fine feed for twelve months—ever since last Christmas Day, in fact. They all ate too much, I'm sorry to say—all but Charles and Unity and the baby. But there was a difference between them, because Charles and Unity stopped quite of their own accord, and the baby would have been eating still, only his mother took him to bed.

These children were all very interesting and all very different. John was grown up, as I mentioned before, and he was going to be a farmer like his father. Mary was fifteen, and she helped her mother and sang songs rather nicely. Teddy

was not particularly gifted, but he could catch trout in the streams better than any of the rest of the family, and that was his strong point. Frank could imitate the noise of ducks and turkeys and fowls—not that that was much use. Charles was the reader, and I believe he had more brains than any of them, though nobody took him very seriously except Unity and the baby. Sarah and Jane were twins, and thought alike, and did the same things, and were naughty together, and good together, and had colds in their noses together, and got mumps together, and were lost together on the Moor once for nearly two days, which was the finest thing they had so far done; and they were rescued together and shared the fame of it. Unity had made no great mark in history so far, but she was the prettiest of them all, and she always put me in mind of a little white ragged-robin that had just suddenly come out by the river, and was looking round it with much surprise at the extraordinary world into which she had budded and bloomed. Unity, in fact, was always ragged and always surprised. On Sundays she was not ragged, but she made up for that by going to church and being more surprised than ever. And she began every sentence with 'I wonder'; and she was quite right and quite wise to be so much astonished at things in general, because everybody ought to be astonished at pretty nearly everything that happens when they are five. The age when nothing astonishes you is eighteen; but after that, as you grow older and older, things gradually begin to astonish you again, until when you get quite old—say from forty to a hundred—much that happens will amaze you, and you'll find the world as puzzling and wonderful at the end as you did at the beginning. But eighteen is the grand age, and remember never to be astonished when you reach it. John Jago was eighteen, and he was grown up, and he never was astonished—not even when, in the middle of the Christmas dinner, his father said a very astonishing thing.

What it was and what came of it you shall hear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLINT HEART GETS TO WORK AGAIN.

'Up along by Fur Tor, when I was riding the pony over and having a look for the foal Nat Slocombe have lost, I fell in with a foreigner,' said Mr. Jago.

When he said 'foreigner,' he didn't mean what you mean.

He was not speaking of a Frenchman or a Russian, a negro or an Indian. He merely meant a stranger. The 'foreigner' very likely had only come from some town a few miles off. In this case, however, he had come from rather a long way off, for he lived in London and was a very clever man.

'Yes,' continued Mr. Jago, 'a lean slip of a chap, long in the legs wi' a learned-looking nose, built for poking into things. And he'm terrible interested in they old roundy-poundies up to Grimspound, and the old stones that the old men heaved up and stuck all over the Moor; and he've offered me ten pound—ten pound!—if I'll do a job for him up 'pon top of Fur Tor.'

'Ten pound, father!' cried Mrs. Jago; and all the little Jagos also cried 'Ten pound, father!'

All except John, who was grown up; and, of course, he was not astonished at anything, owing to his age.

'Yes,' declared Mr. Jago; 'but I'm very much afraid he might so easy and safely have offered a hundred, for 'tis doubtful whether I can do it. In a word, he says there ought to be bronze hid in some of the old men's graves about 'pon the Moor. And if so be as I dig up a bit here, there, or anywhere, he'll give me the money.'

' 'Tis a wild-goose chase,' said Mrs. Jago, 'and well you know it. The last learned fool as comed up here spent six months digging and delving, and what did he find? Some ashes, and a few odd bits of cracked cloam, and three amber beads, the like of which he might have bought to Plymouth for two pence. You mind your own business, Billy. Us'll hear you be going to dig at a rainbow foot for rainbow gold next. And I lay this here gentleman's gold be rainbow gold and no better.'

'What's rainbow gold, mother?' asked Charles. He was the only one of the young Jagos who ever asked questions, but he asked a great many more than his parents could answer.

'It's stuff and nonsense,' said Mrs. Jago, 'that's what it is.'

'The gentleman's name be Nicodemus Nestor Frodsham Perke, F.R.S., British Museum,' said Mr. Jago. He read a card that he had drawn out of his pocket.

'Well, let him go and perk somewhere else,' said Mrs. Jago. 'Us haven't got no use for him.'

If she had known what a very great swell Professor Nicodemus Nestor Frodsham Perke was, I don't suppose that Mrs. Jago would have said this rather rude and silly thing; for

few were more learned than he, and he had written a long book about the New Stone Age, where this story began, and the Bronze Age that followed it; and in this remarkable book he had proved that there must be bronze hidden in the old graves on Dartmoor. Which shows you what a clever man he was; because a common man might have waited till somebody found the bronze and then gone on with his book afterwards; but Professor Perke would have thought that stupid. So he discovered the bronze in his book first and then went down to find it on Dartmoor afterwards. He felt sure that his book must be right, and though other professors, with noses even sharper than his, had said unkind things about the book and declared there was no bronze on Dartmoor, yet many people felt that it was perfectly absurd to suppose a book that had taken a wise man five years to write, and had two hundred and twenty pictures and one thousand and six pages, not to mention the appendix, could possibly be wrong. So sensible readers all agreed with the great and learned professor that if there wasn't any bronze hidden on Dartmoor, somebody must be very much to blame for it.

'Of course, I ban't a-going to waste my time with the man,' explained Mr. Jago; 'but as to-morrow's a holiday and there's nought for me to do, I shall just help him a bit. That old grave as he've found under Fur Tor have never been broke open by the look of it, and nobody but him would have found it, for 'tis right in the midst of the prickliest fuzz-bush as ever I comed across. But to-morrow I be going to break it open—just for to see if anything be there. And no harm's done since the day be a holiday.'

'More fool you,' said Mrs. Jago.

But when the next day came Mr. Billy put on his working clothes and went; and Charles went with him to help carry his furze-hook and pick and spade and basket, and Ship went with them to have a bit of sport, for he was a hard-working dog and enjoyed a holiday as much as anybody when he got one.

They reached the spot, but the Professor was not there. As a matter of fact he had sat down two miles off to rest, and been so much interested in his great and wonderful thoughts that he had quite forgotten to rise again. He had suddenly struck upon quite a new way of explaining Dartmoor, and why Dartmoor was Dartmoor, and where it had come from, and what it looked like millions of years ago—long, long before even the New Stoners

had arrived upon it. Which subject so much interested Professor Perke, that he sat there and filled three notebooks with wonderful ideas; and then suddenly he sneezed forty-two times running, and found that he had caught the worst cold he had ever had in his life. So he thrust the notebooks into his pockets, and went to the farm where he was lodging, and put his feet into hot water and mustard, and tallowed his nose, and took a favourite medicine of his, and then retired to bed and stopped there for three days. During that time he never once thought of Mr. Jago; but it didn't much matter, because Mr. Jago never once thought of him.

What really happened was this: Charles and his father and Ship arrived at the old cairn, and, little knowing that one of the most famous men who had ever been a great and powerful and terrible chief in the old days was buried beneath it, cut down the furzes, and hacked away the peat and heather, and threw open the tomb as if they were merely digging potatoes. It was the grave of the great Phutt that they opened, and, of course, they found no bronze there, because, as you may remember, Phutt was a New Stone man, and he passed away some years before the arrival of the first pin on Dartmoor. So Billy Jago found no bronze in the grave of Phutt; in fact, I was going to say he found nothing at all, and it is a pity for him that I cannot do so; but something he did find, and he picked it up and put it in his pocket.

'The gentleman might like this here funny old stone,' he said.

' 'Tis a piece of flint, father,' declared Charles.

'Of course 'tis—any fool can see that,' answered the man; and he spoke so roughly that Charles felt much astonished, and started away from him. Because Billy Jago, as a rule, was the kindest father that ever loved a parcel of boys and girls; and it amazed his son to hear this sharp word. But if he had known half as much as you know, he would not have been amazed at all.

Alas! Billy Jago was now carrying the Flint Heart in his waistcoat pocket; and the dreadful charm, after such a long rest, felt bubbling over with wickedness, and was delighted to set to work again without the least delay.

If Charles had chanced to look south-south by west at that moment, he would have seen the Thunder Spirit laughing over

the edge of a black cloud; but he was staring at his father, and so missed the sight. As for Billy, he loaded his pipe, lighted it, and then turned to Charles.

'Pick up the tools and carry 'em home,' he ordered.

'All of them, father!' cried Charles.

'Yes, all of 'em. You heard what I said. You ain't deaf, are you?'

His father strode off, and Charles stood almost as still as the granite stones of Phutt's grave. He had never been so much surprised in his life, and presently his astonishment turned into grief. He cried a little, for he was only twelve and he loved his father exceedingly. Then he dried his eyes, got the tools together, and found that he could just carry them. So he whistled to Ship, and together the dog and the boy started for home.

But long before they got there, Charles felt the weight of the tools was more than he could bear, and Ship, who happened to be a very observant dog, noticed his difficulty, so he caught the pick in his teeth and dragged it along to help Charles.

Progress was slow, and it had grown dark before they got home to Merripit; but it could not be called 'Merry' any more, for the Flint Heart had arrived and set to work at once. When Charles came in, he found his mother in a fearful rage, walking up and down the kitchen; and John, who was grown up, sat by the fire nursing a black eye and trying not to look astonished; and Mary was getting the twins into bed; and Teddy was under the table shivering with fear; and Frank was hiding behind the settle; and Unity was merely wondering; and the baby was sound asleep.

His mother turned to Charles at once and began to question him.

'All along of that wretch of a man—no doubt,' she said. 'I suppose he've made his ten pounds, and now he feels too grand and fine for his own home and his wife and childer.'

'Do please give me something to eat,' said Charles. 'I'm terrible hungry, and father left me to drag home all the tools, and but for Ship here, who helped, and who's terrible hungry too, I should never have fetched 'em all back.'

'Who was this here man?' asked his mother, while she got Charles something to eat. 'I should think 'twas Old Scrat

himself from the way your father's going on. He's bewitched and overlooked by the evil eye—so sure as I'm alive.'

'Nobody came near us,' explained Charles with his mouth full. 'We dug and dug, and found nought but a bit of flint with a hole in it. And then, so sudden as a flash of lightning, father turned on me and spoke as never he spoke afore, and ordered me to bring home the tools, and went off without me. And, by the looks of you all, he wasn't no better when he got back.'

Teddy spoke and told Charles what had happened.

'He comed in shouting out for his dinner, and when mother said 'twasn't ready, he said it ought to be, and John stood up for mother, and father knocked him edgewise over the fender; and just look at John's eye! And I hooked it after that, and so did Frank, for we thought 'twould be our turn next. Then he went for mother again, and when we come back they was having a pretty set-to—wasn't you, mother?'

'I doubt he's gone mad—or else the pixies are playing a game with him,' said Charles.

Then Teddy went on:

'But as a rule when father and mother have words, mother gets the best of it—don't you, mother? Only this time father got the best of it. And he ate up all the tid-bits of the dinner, and then off he went, because he said he wanted to pluck a crow with Mr. French down in the valley. He said he didn't see why Mr. French should be the leading man in Postbridge, and he wasn't going to stand it. And goodness knows what'll happen next.'

At that moment a terrible noise broke out down by the garden gate. Men were shouting and dogs were barking. Then there was a crash, and Ship rushed out to see who the dogs were, and Charles rushed out to see who the men were. But Mrs. Jago stopped where she was, and so did John, who was grown up, and so did Mary and Teddy and Frank and Unity. They had been so much terrified already that they felt it did not much matter what happened.

Mrs. Jago sighed, and John asked for another piece of brown paper for his eye.

Then the master of the house came in, and Charles followed him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEETING.

MR. JAGO was quite pleased, but he did not show pleasure in the old and kindly fashion; he came in very roughly and slapped his leg and explained that he had done a good stroke of business.

'Met old Bassett going down the road, and I offered him a bit more for that field of his than French offered, and now I've got thicky meadow that I've been wanting this many a day. I've just been one too many for French; and when I met him, I told him what I'd done, and he got in a proper rage and lifted his stick to me, and then I gave him a proper clout on the head and rolled him over in the hedge!'

After explaining all this, Mr. Jago called for his supper and behaved roughly and unkindly; but he did not strike anybody, and he did not talk to anybody but John, who was grown up, and also had two black eyes. His father seemed quite to have forgotten that he had just hurt John so cruelly with his fist, and he talked about the future as if he and John were the best of friends.

'We'll soon wake this place up!' he said. 'Everybody's asleep here. If we get to work and harden our hearts against all their nonsense, we'll come out at the top of them all by this time next year. I know how to get the best of them, and I'm going to do it, and John's going to help.'

He explained to John a number of horrid ideas that had occurred to him. They were not exactly the sort of ideas that occurred to Phutt when he owned the Flint Heart, because the world had moved on a good deal since Phutt's time; and among other things that had come into it were policemen.

Policemen have quite spoiled a good many of the fine and dashing deeds people used to do, because they interfere and march you off to prison; and there's nothing in the least fine or dashing about being locked up. But Billy Jago knew that there were policemen and prisons, and he had no wish to quarrel with the one or find himself in the other; so he planned his future accordingly. His ideas were quite as hard and cruel as Phutt's ideas, only instead of carrying them out like Phutt, and knocking people's heads off, and burning their houses down,

and stealing their cattle, he had to trust to cleverness in business and hardness in all his dealings. There are all sorts of dodges in business, I am sorry to say, and Billy Jago, who was once such an honest and straight and kind-hearted man, seemed now not only to have learned every one of these abominable tricks, but also to have become horribly clever at putting them into practice. The thing that puzzled Mrs. Jago most of all was to know how and where her husband had picked up such wicked ideas. And, of course, he couldn't tell her himself because he didn't know. But you and I know only too well that it was the Flint Heart that taught him. And men who used to laugh at Billy and call him a good-natured fool and everybody's friend, laughed no more. Or if they did, it was on the wrong side of their mouths. And laughing on the wrong side of your mouth is almost as painful as having a tooth out, as you can easily prove if you care to try it. First laugh on the right side of your mouth, which is the side you always laugh upon; then turn your laugh over carefully with your tongue to the wrong side, and you will find it hurt like anything. It sounds quite different, too, when you laugh on that side.

Time passed, and Billy began to be a marked man. He was very nearly marked in a way he didn't much like, for an enemy—he had a lot of enemies now, I regret to say—hid behind the hedge on a dark night, knowing that Billy must pass that way; and when he came along—whistling and very pleased with himself over a good stroke of business—the enemy flung a brickbat at him and nearly hit him on the ear. And Mr. Jago heard where the brickbat had come from, and he jumped into the hedge, and for once in a way behaved exceedingly like Phutt, and thrashed his enemy until the man wriggled about, like a worm on a hook, and yowled for mercy.

But in his home, I'm thankful to tell you, Billy gradually grew a little calmer. Even the charm couldn't keep up the pressure above a certain number of pounds to the square inch on his heart; and sometimes Billy relaxed and laughed among his children, and was quite the nice, old, amiable father he had been. But these good moments only happened very occasionally, when the Flint Heart was tired, and, between them, he behaved in a fierce and harsh and savage manner.

At last the children and Ship held a meeting about it in the wood-house, and Charles took the chair, because John was grown

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up, as I think I told you, and it looked as though John was going to imitate his father.

Charles said: 'Brothers and sisters and Ship, we have assembled here to find out some way to make father nice again as he used to be.'

And all the children answered, 'Hear, hear!'

Then Frank addressed the meeting, and he said: 'Father's a regular right-down beast.'

And Charles said: 'Order! Order! The question before the meeting is how to make him nicer. Besides, you'll hurt Ship's feelings if you say that.'

Then Frank sat down, and Teddy got up and spoke, and he said: 'Let's give him a present.'

And all the children said: 'Hear, hear!'

So it was decided to give him a present.

Then Mary got up and asked: 'Where are we going to get it from?'

And all the children said: 'Hear, hear!'

The twins never had spoken in public, and they wouldn't break their rule.

Charles called upon them, but they refused; he urged them, but they were firm and shook their heads. Next, in order of seniority, it was Ship's turn, and he barked very loudly and wagged his tail, with such unusually far-reaching wags, that he almost knocked Charles out of the chair.

And all the children said: 'Hear, hear!'

And now, if you're really as clever as I take you to be, you will bowl me over and convict me of telling a dreadful story. Not this dreadful story of the Flint Heart, but another dreadful story of the dog called Ship. Because, when he first appeared, I mentioned quite distinctly that he was an old English sheep-dog without any tail; and now I have gone and given him a splendid tail, and, worse, I have made him wag it, and nearly knock Charles out of the chair at the meeting with it.

How am I going to get out of that fix?

I will tell you the truth, and the truth has got quite as many people out of a fix in its time as it has got other people into a fix. The truth, then, is that Ship had no tail of his own, but, for an important thing like the meeting, he borrowed a tail from a collie dog who also lived at Merripit. He hired the tail for one afternoon—just as people sometimes hire a suit of black

velvet and a sword when they are going to attend a King's levée; and he paid two bones and a bit of rabbit's skin for it.

And now we must really get back to the meeting.

Ship merely lent the meeting his moral support: he was not much use, because nobody knew what his barks meant; but Charles hoped better things from Unity. She had to speak last, and she was a practised speaker, and knew exactly what she wanted to say before she began.

She said: 'I wonder if big brother Charles had not better go to the Pixies for father's present.'

And all the children said: 'Hear, hear! Hear, hear!'

And Ship barked 'Hear, hear!'

And Charles bowed and was bound to admit that Unity had made the cleverest and most practical speech of the meeting.

'I will do my best,' he told them. 'We've none of us ever seen a Pixie; but we all know very well there are such people, and to-morrow evening I'll go alone to the Pixies' Holt, and I hope I may have the luck to see one and speak to him. And if he'll only be so good as to listen, something may come of it.'

After that the meeting broke up, but not before Mary had proposed a vote of thanks to Charles for taking the chair and for what he promised to do.

(To be continued.)

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